

OVER INDIAN AND ANIMAL TRAILS



JEAN M. THOMPSON



PAUL BRANSOM



OVER INDIAN AND ANIMAL TRAILS



"FAR OFF IN THE GLOOMY CAVERN HE SAW A PAIR OF RED EYES PEERING
AT HIM ANGRILY"—Page 91

OVER INDIAN AND ANIMAL TRAILS

BY

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WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOR BY

PAUL BRANSOM



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LOVINGLY DEDICATED
TO MY SISTER
MARY DUDLEY SMITH
AND HER CHILDREN

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Over Indian and Animal Trails

WITH LITTLE BEAVER AND THE OLD CHIEF

CHAPTER I

WHY THE WEASEL FEARS THE HEELS OF A RABBIT

OUTSIDE the wigwam, in the twilight, while the camp fires brightened the circle, Little Beaver, the Indian boy, loved to listen to the wonderful wood-lore tales told by the old chief, his grandfather. One evening when the story was finished Little Beaver exclaimed, laughing:

“Ha, is this true, grandfather, that Moween the little black bear catches her supper by waving her big paw in the water until Skootum the trout becomes dizzy and helpless?”

Then the old chief struck the earth solemnly thrice with his hand, which is the Indian way of saying, “Cross my heart, it is quite true.” Thus did Little Beaver become wise in wood-lore, and the ways of the wild things, for the old chief had much knowledge.

“Believe not that Wabasso the hare is a coward,”

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spoke the old man. "Lest you do think this, listen well to the tale of Kagax the weasel, who fears the timid hare more than all others. He has learned to dread Wabasso's hind legs and hard heels, and is always careful not to get in their way, for once upon a time Kagax had such a terrible encounter with the hare that he will never forget it." And the chief told Little Beaver this tale of Kagax and Wabasso.

Wabasso, the great brown hare, was the largest male rabbit that ever followed the scented pine wood trails. The thick fur coat of Wabasso was of a soft reddish brown, but his breast and stomach were a pure dazzling white, like unto the snow when it lies soft and fresh, newly fallen.

The nose of Wabasso was the length of his silken, sensitive ears, when they lay flattened, reaching to the middle of his brown back. His legs were full of tough sinews; very long and strong were they, and so fleet that he could outleap a doe. Fully twenty-one feet could old Wabasso the giant hare leap at one bound.

No, not like common hares was he, for beside Wabasso most of his tribe appeared but trembling, hunted things, always looking over their shoulders like cowards, as they ran. Boldly Wabasso hunted over much-traveled trails, worn by big game. Strip-

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ping the bark from young poplars, drumming loudly and impudently with his strong, sinewy feet against some tree trunk, he would wake the echoes of the forest with his noise-making.

This he did to show to all things that he was no coward; besides, it was a signal, a call which Wabasso made to summon his mate to join him when he was lonely in the forest. Then would she leap away to meet him, leaving her family alone in the abandoned fox burrow which Wabasso had found empty and taken for their home. And, having joined Wabasso, they always went off together, happily stripping whole patches of willow shrub bark in a single night.

But one day Wabasso and his mate stayed too long at their feasting. The mother hare went home first, and when Wabasso followed her, leaping over the nettle barrier which hid their burrow, there he found his little mate all humped up like a sick squaw, trembling and sorrowing. Her long brown ears were flattened upon her back, while her soft eyes bulged with fear. Without stopping even to rub noses, Wabasso soon saw that one of the baby hares was gone, and that the one which had been left was badly hurt and bleeding.

Then Wabasso the brave rushed forth from the burrow like lightning, for he was mad with rage. He had seen upon the neck of the little wounded hare

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a tell-tale row of red, pin-like prints, made by cruel teeth. His own teeth chattered and his eyes flashed fire; well enough he knew who made those cruel marks, for Wabasso was old and wise.

No need to ask which way the enemy had gone; the old hare already knew, for his quick eye had found a delicate trail which led straight off through the rank ferns, and soon Wabasso was following that faint, musky scented trail, which still clung to the dewy ferns. With long swift leaps did the giant hare start forth eagerly upon the war-path; thus did the long hunt begin.

All day Wabasso journeyed, halting occasionally when he came upon certain marks left behind by his enemy. At the foot of a tree he saw a scattered bunch of blue and black-barred feathers and broken egg-shells, while overhead among the balsams Dee-dee-askh the blue jay screamed angrily, complaining to every one that she had been robbed. Everywhere the hare came across wicked, cruel work, but never once did he give up his quest or lose track of that musky scent which he followed.

For many suns Wabasso the giant hare journeyed, through deep forests and over steep craggy ledges, until at last the very nails upon his feet were worn down close to the flesh, and sometimes he left a track of blood upon the trail. Now the one whom Wabasso tracked so tirelessly was none other than sly old

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Kagax, king of all the weasel tribe. A robber, and a very cruel one, was Kagax, long dreaded and hated by all creatures who wore fur or feathers. Not satisfied with merely killing and slaying for food was this old weasel, but he would wantonly kill anything which chanced to stray across his path, just because he was cruel and hateful.

As Wabasso the hare traveled he saw much. Right out in the center of a great balsam swamp stood the watch-tower of the birds. Like a ghost it rose from the black swamp; just one solitary blasted hemlock, it stood high above everything, so that anything which entered the swamp might readily be seen from its scraggy, blasted top.

“Koo-ee, koo-ee,” screamed Hawahak the brown-barred hawk, from the watch-tower by day. “Whoo, hoo, hoo,” grunted old Koos-koos-koos the horned owl, he of the tufted ears and cat face, as he roosted at twilight, perched like a shadow on the white stump, right in the moonlight which fell across his yellow eyes. “Quawk,” all night would call back tirelessly a little heron down in the reeds below him. Then afar off, among the ledges across the marshes, Wabasso the hare’s quick ears caught the yell of Pekompf the wildcat, calling to his mate. The old hare knew and recognized all these calls of the wild kindred; they were his neighbors, and he did not fear them.

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But not a sound did Kagax the weasel, the crafty robber, make as he went; only a hiss and a slight squeak of triumph did he give when his sharp teeth met in some tender neck, and even that squeak might have been made by little Tookhees the wood-mouse—you never could be certain. But Wabasso the hare knew that Kagax had entered the swamp, for the thin musky trail led straight there. And sure enough, the crafty weasel was even now sneaking silently between the rushes to where the black duck had her nest, low among the water reeds.

Already Wabasso heard the soft voice of Wabun, the east wind, stirring the rushes harshly. Although it was soft enough, the wind, still it was a warning signal, and soon the black duck would rise and join the migrating wedge before the cold Moon of Snow Shoes should come and film over the marsh with ice.

But in spite of these warnings, which Wabasso knew so well, he did not lose heart and still followed the war-path, determined to catch up with Kagax the weasel. All through long days and nights, through the painted month of Falling Leaves, did the hare follow the long, musky trail of his enemy. Sometimes he even caught a glimpse ahead of the weasel's brown coat. When Wabasso saw him, with a great leap he would plunge ahead, landing just where the weasel's shadow had fallen, just on the

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very spot where he had seen the brown brackens stir. But always when his feet struck the spot, it was sure to be empty, for already Kagax was far away.

At last came drifting, floating down, the first snowflakes; they whispered and hissed through the pine needles, and then sly Kagax the weasel was very glad. For no longer did he take the trouble to hide himself in the shadows, but becoming quite bold he traveled in the open, seeking out wide patches of snow. No longer did he wear a dark brown coat, but one of pure white, which matched the snow exactly. Thus did it become doubly hard to see Kagax, and poor old Wabasso the hare, now worn and thin, was almost tempted to give up the long hard chase.

Still, as he sat for a brief time to rest and meditate, he would remember suddenly his little trembling mate, and the fearful wrongs done him by sly Kagax, so he bravely determined to press on and slay his enemy.

At last, one moonlight night, Wabasso reached the far edge of the swamp, and raising his weary eyes, he peered out across a pond covered with thick blue ice, over which the moon was making a beautiful silvery path.

It was very lonely around the pond now, for the black geese had gone; no longer did the herons fish

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there on the shore, or scream back and forth to each other their "quawk, quawk." Still the swamp was not quite deserted, for right over on the old hemlock watch-tower Wabasso saw a great, shadowy form, which watched and watched with patient golden eyes; it was Koos-koos-koos, the cat-faced owl. And Wabasso felt less lonely.

Then did he hide himself among the brown, rustling brackens, not far from shore. Crouching low, his long ears resting across his shoulders, eyes staring, watching, nose trembling, scenting the wind, Wabasso waited. Suddenly, right near the edge of the ice, he saw the reeds tremble—something was stirring them; something was coming! Next thing, as Wabasso, never moving a muscle, watched, he saw a small, wedge-like, dirty-white head, with close-set round ears and red, sparkling, mean-looking eyes, thrust through the reeds. Peering furtively about, the red eyes, seeing no danger, were followed by a snake-like, gliding body, which came twisting its way straight towards the clump of brackens which concealed Wabasso the hare. And poor old Wabasso, almost unable to control his trembling eagerness, saw, to his joy, that it was none other than his enemy, Kagax the weasel.

Then very, very slowly and gently, being careful not to crack a twig or rattle a reed with his movements, did Wabasso begin to stir. Turning his

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body about, at last he sat with his brown back towards the approaching weasel. Now it happened that the hare's brown coat matched the reeds so perfectly that Kagax did not spy him. For the weasel had already sighted the nest of Koos-koos-koos the owl, and he meant to make a meal of her before the moon set, and so was not very cautious in his movements.

All this time Wabasso waited, keeping watchful eyes over his shoulders, waiting for Kagax to come directly opposite to his hiding place. The next instant, even before the hateful weasel could hiss or turn in his tracks, his round ears suddenly caught a mighty rushing sound; "*zip-p-p*," like the flight of a swift arrow it sounded. Then out shot the long, sinewy legs of Wabasso the giant hare, catching the weasel right in its side; like a ball they tossed the white-coated thing over and over again high in the air. Then, with a final wide sweep, out flew the long legs of Wabasso, and this time they sent the limp body of Kagax the weasel flying, spinning, like a swift arrow through the air, to land with a thud upon the hard blue ice out in the very center of the pond.

Others had been watching brave Wabasso as he conquered his enemy. Uttering a loud "Who, ho-ho," of triumph and joy, Koos-koos-koos the owl swiftly spread her great wings and, flying down

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from her watch-tower, she swished low, making a wide circle over the pond. And when she flew back to the hemlock watch-tower she bore in her great yellow talons the limp form of Kagax, the enemy of Wabasso the giant hare. And Wabasso was glad, as with prodigious leaps he left the swamps and entered the forest seeking his home trail.

But you must know that the weasel tribe had learned a lesson, for news travels far and wide over the forest trails. And Wabasso the hare was now reckoned a great brave because he had conquered Kagax the weasel. So this is why no weasel will ever trust himself *behind* Wabasso the hare, because always now a weasel fears and dreads the hind legs and heels of a rabbit.

The story was finished, and the old chief solemnly struck the earth thrice with his hand, and Little Beaver knew the tale was quite true.

CHAPTER II

THE NAMING OF LITTLE BEAVER

AHMEEK the beaver dove with a loud splash into deep water, and Little Beaver, touching the old chief gently, asked:

"What was that? Do you think it is Little Bear out spearing the black horned fish, grandfather? Ho, if it is he, then he is clumsy with his paddle, and the fish will hide themselves from him," laughed Little Beaver derisively.

Again, above the loon's scream and the low call of the whip-poor-will in the black balsams, the boy heard Ahmeek as he slapped the water; then followed a sound of loud sawing.

"Ho, I know what it is now! 'Tis the squaws; they are hewing logs out, shaping them into big troughs for the feast of Muk-kuks, the sugar-making, to catch the white, sweet waters of the maple," suggested Little Beaver wisely.

"Nay, you are wrong," chuckled the old chief. "'Tis but Ahmeek the beaver, at his labors. Listen, hear how he is making the chips fly, with his strong yellow teeth. Welcome is the sound to my old ears,

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for he and his tribe are once more coming back to our northern forests. They are welcome.

“Know you why you bear the name of Little Beaver? It was given you because we Indians respect the industrious beaver. There is no animal in all the woods so wise and patient; and you will do well to imitate his ways.”

“But are not the names of ‘Little Bear’ and ‘Big War Eagle’ far nobler than ‘Little Beaver’?” questioned the boy wistfully.

“Hugh!” scoffed the chief. “No name could be *better* for a boy than Little Beaver; and that you may learn to know his ways, as I have, and to imitate his wise example, you shall hear his story, how he bravely faced his trials, how he overcame all obstacles, though persecuted; and best of all you shall learn to imitate his industry, which is most wonderful of all.”

Long ago our tribes, the Iroquois, named this part of the north “Kohsaraga,” which means “the beaver hunting country.” Here, between the chains of the Great Lakes, guarded well by the towering mountains, lived many beaver, raising their lodges and building their dams along the water-ways. On Moose Lake Inlet lived old Ahmeek, king of all the beavers. His tribe was then the largest in all that country.

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Ahmeek was a comrade to the Indians, and a friend to leaping, painted Skootum the trout. For he dammed up the rushing brooks, causing them to spread and flood the marshes, so that there were deep places where the fish might hide and raise their young, and in these deep water-ways it was hard always to catch the painted fish. Then, in the spring, when the ice packs went tearing down from the mountain streams, sweeping everything away, the freshets were met by the strong dams which Ahmeek and his tribe had built, and which held the ice until the sun had melted it away. Thus were the fish saved from being swept away by ice and flood.

Wise was old Ahmeek the beaver; he never built a dam idly, or without cause, and no Indian ever disturbed his building, except occasionally, when came the Frost Spirit, sending bitter cold into our lodges. Then one of our tribe would need a beaver pelt for his freezing papoose; but even then the Indian, before taking the life of a beaver, was very careful to beg its pardon—such was the custom of our tribe.

Well did I know and learn to respect old Ahmeek, and often would I journey for two suns, alone, to visit his village. Then I would hide myself near the edge of his lake and watch the beavers at work and play. Sometimes there were half a hundred in sight; and gradually they seemed to trust me; they

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did not run and hide themselves, as they do now, for they trusted the Indian, their friend.

I watched them as they cut the big trees of yellow birch and poplar. These they would float into place, using little canals or roads which they had dug in the banks to carry the logs for their dam-making in the big pond. Using saplings and alder sticks and birch, the beavers would fill in the open places with clay and grass to make it quite solid. This they slapped firmly down with their flat tails; for they must build their dam strong enough to defy the Frost Spirit as well as the flood.

Old Ahmeek was big and strong; smooth and wide were the chips which I saw him cut with his yellow teeth. He and his tribe worked both day and night, but often the beavers would stop their work to take a good look at me; for by this time I showed myself and they were no longer afraid of me, an Indian boy.

Best of all, I loved to watch them at their games. At a signal from Ahmeek, all his tribe came together; assembling from the shore and from deep in the water, they came. Usually their frolic would begin about twilight, and such a time as they had, while I watched eagerly!

Strange whistlings they made, slapping the water loudly, splashing it high as they wrestled together like strong men. They dove, had long swimming matches and, changing about, played the game of

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the fleetest swimmer. Then, very suddenly, Ahmeek would give a loud signal, and the pond would all at once become silent, and each beaver would hurry back to his work. They had a season of play as well as of work.

Many enemies had Ahmeek the beaver to guard against, even in the old days, but these were not then men; they belonged to the fur-footed tribes. These enemies were Lhoks the panther, Eleemos the red-coated fox, and Keebuckh the otter, whom they feared in the Time of Snow Shoes, for then would the otter destroy their dams, and lower the water in their ponds so their food was cut off. And Malsun the gray wolf loved nothing better than to lie in ambush for many hours, that he might find a beaver lodge unguarded, and devour the little ones before the mother beaver returned.

But in spite of all these wild enemies, worse ones were coming soon to break up the peaceful villages of Ahmeek and his tribe. One evil day the pale-face trappers came. They soon found Ahmeek and his lodges and dams, and then came dreadful times for the old beaver king.

One day I came across a secret blaze which I knew never had been made by any of our tribe. A trapper, I knew, always blazed trees thirty paces or so apart, and these marks which I found were higher up on the tree trunk than for the game trail.

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As I neared the secret spot where I knew a trap had been set, I saw a knife-hack upon a sapling, and then a bent twig. This showed me which way to take to the water, where the beavers lived. Next I found a broken stick thrust in the earth and touching the water; and I knew the trap had been set beneath the water.

“Ha,” thought I, “I will outwit this mean trapper, the enemy of Ahmeek the beaver.” So I pulled up the stick with glee—perhaps I had saved old Ahmeek. Then I hacked other trees along the trail to throw the trapper off his track. But in spite of all these attempts to outwit the mean trappers and befriend the beavers, the pale-face hunters came in scores, and finally drove Ahmeek and his tribe far away into a strange country, after killing most of his family. So that for many, many moons no Indian ever saw any of the tribe of Ahmeek in the North Country.

Now this is actually what happened to old Ahmeek, the king beaver, and his mate, who were very old and much wiser than the rest of his tribe, and so, each time the old beavers had their homes broken up and raided, somehow they would always manage to outwit the trappers and make their escape.

But at last, journeying far, they were finally swept farther south into a strange country, by a great flood. Then did the two old beavers make a grave

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mistake—they began to build a new lodge right in the midst of a pale-face camp. Finally, a few stragglers joined Ahmeek and his mate and they set about to build a mighty dam.

But this dam the trappers and settlers did not want, for it would soon flood their roads. So, roughly, they tore down the beavers' dam. But Ahmeek was not discouraged, for in just one night, by working all night long, they managed to build the dam again. The next night, thinking to frighten away the beavers, the settlers built fires upon their round-roofed lodges. Then what did Ahmeek and his workers do but build high screens of brush-wood about the blazing fires to shut off the glare, and proceed with their work. And the next night the men saw the beavers busily at work felling many fine poplar trees, so they set up a wire fence to keep the beavers away. But again did Ahmeek and his faithful workers outwit the men. They cleverly piled up wood high above the wire fences, and climbing over, were soon sawing down the poplars again.

But not for Ahmeek the beaver, or the Indian, are the ways of white men, and the place which the beavers had chosen for their settlement was not good. Then something strange came to them in their pond, which the beavers did not understand. They began to feel strangely sick, and from their round

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backs the fur commenced to fall in patches. Then they saw with alarm that Skootum the trout, and Maskenozha the pike, and other fish who lived in the lake were dying by scores. Floating upon the water the beavers saw their silvery sides uppermost. They were quite dead. Now all this was owing to certain bad, bitter medicine in the water where they lived.

For now, close to the lake, was a great place filled with whirring wheels. The settlers had built it to weave bright cloths, and the dyes, the bad medicine which they used, had poisoned the water for miles. One by one the beavers died until at last only old Ahmeek king of all the beavers was left. Then one dark night, early in the Moon of Bright Nights, the last old beaver, old Ahmeek, sick and discouraged, stole off alone into the shadows, leaving far behind him the dreadful bitter waters of that fatal pond.

On and on wandered poor old lonely Ahmeek. No heart had he now to set about building a new lodge, just for himself. Each day, as he went farther north the old beaver hoped to meet some of his scattered, hunted tribe. Alas, he failed; for they had by this time been slain or driven very far away to the northward. Still, with hope, the old beaver went on, until at last he began to see familiar things with his old, bleary eyes.

At last he reached his old country. Welcome to him

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was the first glimpse which he caught of the pointed firs which he so well remembered. Dark they stood against the sky, like marching warriors—a mighty band. He had reached Moose Lake at last. Happy was old Ahmeek when he heard the fresh, sweet song of Owaissa the bluebird, and heard the loud scream of Mahug the gray loon ringing across the lake, for they had arrived, the loons. Soon the pleasant sun would shine out, warming his tired old bones.

On the edge of the lake sat Ahmeek one gray morning, watching the ice cakes which still whirled and bobbed in the lake. But the sun shone, and Ahmeek, taking courage, began to comb out his grizzled whiskers and rub his scarred old ears. Then, quite suddenly he sat bolt upright, for right out upon a swirling cake of ice he caught sight of a familiar figure. It was a beaver! Ahmeek, without thinking further of his coat, slid off into the water, and soon the little beaver had seen him, and together they made for the shore. Old Ahmeek had found a companion; a gentle mate.

Thus did the first of the beavers again return to our North Country from which they had been hunted and betrayed by the white men, long before. Now, it is said, their old enemies the white men do not hunt and harry the beavers as of old; which is well. They are to be “protected.”

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“That is why, Little Beaver, I rejoice once more to hear the beavers at their work, for always were the beavers and the Indians friends.

“See then that you always protect the beaver and his tribe, as all your ancestors have before you. And never do anything which shall bring disgrace upon the noble name of Little Beaver, named thus for the king of all the beavers. Long may his tribe increase in the Northland,” finished the old chief.

CHAPTER III

THE GHOST OF MUSKRAT VILLAGE

“THERE are cowards even among the wild kindred,” spoke the chief, “and that you may become braver, I will tell the story of Musquash the muskrat, who deserted his pleasant village, because he was a coward.”

It seemed strange that lovely Lone Lake should be named thus, because really it was never lonely about the lake. At twilight strange noises might be heard all along shore. Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will would begin with a “Churp,” and then from every dark thicket came their song. Vain old Quoskh the heron was a great noise-maker. Filling his long bill with water, he would spout it forth, making a sound not unlike driving a stake. At the same time he would begin a strange kind of dance, skipping about on his stilt-like legs. Then he would peer right and left to see if his mate had been admiring him.

Mahug the great loon loudly screamed, “Hoo-ha, ha,” then Dahinda the giant bull-frog would bray forth, “Ah-r-r-m, Ah, r, r, m,” and in the bogs

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the young frogs joined in. “Tr, r, r, r, Tr, r, r,” they shrilled in high-pitched voices.

There were moving things, too, for across the black waters spread ripples, where sluggish hornpouts cut the surface with their cruel horns. Skootum the trout suddenly leaped high to snatch a white moth, and certain V-shaped trails showed where Musquash the muskrat swam beneath the water.

Muskrat village, over which he reigned, extended back into the swamps which surrounded Lone Lake. Although most of his tribe led roving lives, Musquash was so popular, that instead of moving off, new colonies kept coming in to join the tribe of old Musquash.

The main lodge, where Musquash himself lived, he had built in an old, but skillful, fashion. It is said that ages ago the wise beavers told the muskrats just how to build their huts. And so old Musquash first selected a high grass tussock, which stood well out of the water and upon this foundation he had set up his lodge, taking care to leave the cushion-like top of the tussock for his bed.

Upon this, beneath his roof of twigs, grass and mud, Musquash had carried great mouthfuls of dry swamp grass, soft and yielding, which he heaped upon the tussock, making a fine couch. Musquash had thoughtfully made two doors to his lodge, one

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above and another beneath the water, where, at the first signal of alarm he would dive deep, then, quite unseen, he could enter his hut by the under water opening.

Always, when Musquash and his followers slept, he was careful to leave a sentinel muskrat on guard, whose duty it was to slap the water loudly with his long tail and warn the sleeping village when danger was near. Whenever this sentinel sounded out his alarm outside, then you might hear "plunk, plunk-plunk" from inside the muskrat lodges. This was the noise each frightened rat made when he jumped from his bed into the water, always escaping by some secret water-way passage. Now the muskrats of old Musquash's tribe were not easily frightened, or cowards, for they led a life of peace under the reign of Musquash, and besides, did they not know very well every creature who visited the shores of the lake? It is only the *things which they do not understand*, which frighten the wood people.

On a certain fine moonlight night in the Moon of Leaves, old Musquash and his tribe started forth from their lodges for a long stroll. Musquash led them around the borders of the lake to a certain marshy spot where they loved to go to dig flagroot, which is good medicine for the wild. They dearly loved to strip down the pale green leaves of the

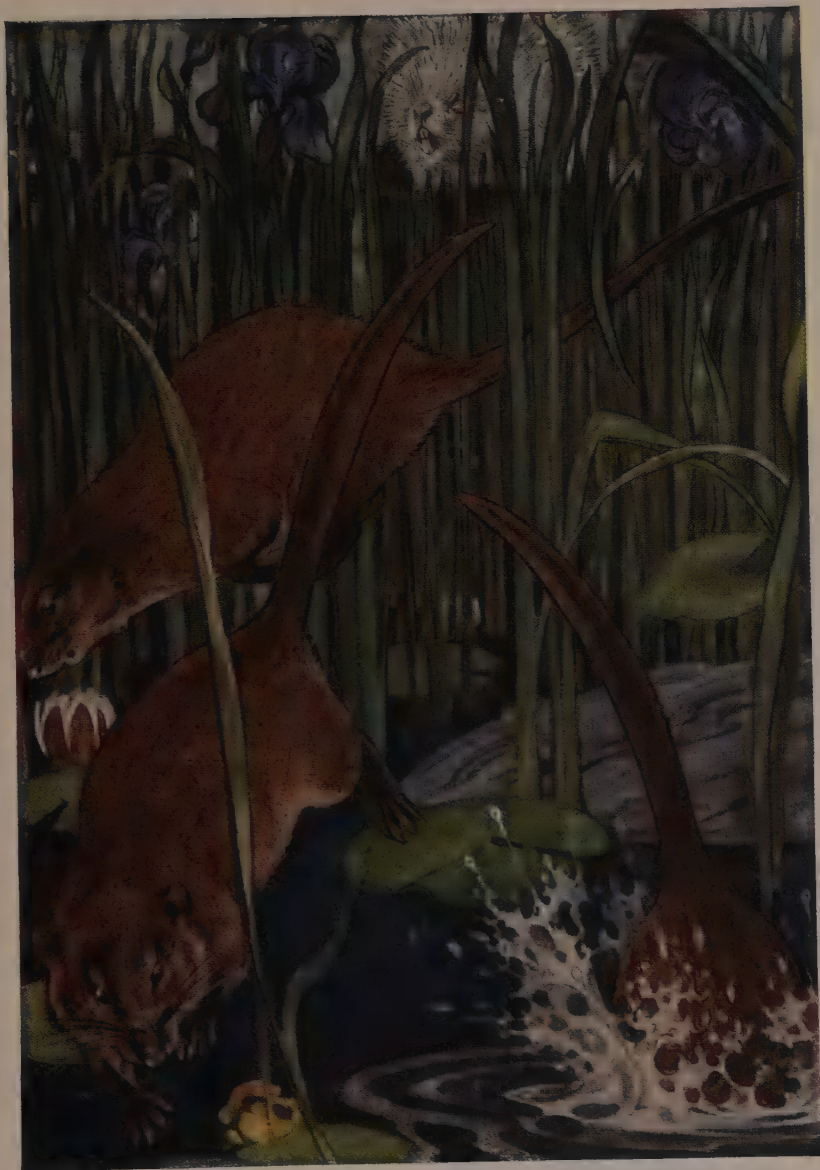
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sweet flag blades and find the tender green sprouts—the “graters.”

As soon as they reached the marshes where the tall waving flags stood, with their little black paws they eagerly stripped down the leaves, or dove down into the water, grubbing in the black ooze and mud, bringing forth the spicy roots in great mouthfuls, washing off the black mud daintily before they ate. Chasing each other teasingly and squeaking happily together, they feasted.

Musquash the old king sat a little apart, but surrounded by his near family, and as he ate flagroot, from time to time his watchful eyes peered off into the shadowy places. He saw plainly enough when Nemox the fisher, and two old raccoons came down along shore, hunting for crawfish. Then, suddenly, Musquash stopped nibbling his roots, and sitting upright, his black paws held against his wet breast, he stared with frightened, bulging eyes at a strange, unfamiliar thing which seemed to come out of the very earth. The thing which Musquash spied was white, ghostly, and mysterious, as it stole in and out between the dark bushes along shore.

Just as old Musquash spied the ghostly thing, his mate raised her gray, dripping whiskered snout, and a mouthful of roots, from the water. She too, caught one glimpse of the slow creeping, mysterious white thing, gave a terrified “slap, slap, slap” on the



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water with her tail, and instantly every muskrat had gone.

Moo-wee-suk, the old raccoon, caught the alarm sound of the muskrats; for always one tribe warns another when danger is abroad; and then he forgot all about his crawfish hunting and hurried off to climb into a tall tree. Not a single muskrat was to be seen, for, by this time they were all safely hidden inside their lodges. There they lay quite flat, but with chattering teeth, for never had the muskrats seen such a white, mysterious thing in all their lives.

But worse things were to follow. Every night after that, even before Musquash and his family had time to go forth and get food, the awful Jeebi, this white, strange ghost, was sure to make its appearance, strolling idly in and out among the black bushes; boldly coming quite close to the lodges of the muskrats. Once old Musquash himself ventured to poke forth his gray furry face and bleary eyes from the tall grasses of his lodge, peering cautiously into the cattail thicket where the ghost strayed.

Just one look was quite enough for Musquash, and back he scuttled to his grassy bed as fast as he could, too frightened to stick his nose out again that night. Now the thing which Musquash saw, seemed to his startled eyes to look like this. It was big. It bristled. Its fierce eyes blazed strangely. It made a mysterious click, clicking sound as it moved, which

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the frightened Musquash imagined must be its teeth snapping angrily at him.

Now had it been winter, instead of summer, Musquash might have thought the stranger one of the weasel tribe, who wear white fur instead of brown in the season of Snow Shoes. But no; it was now May, the Moon of Leaves. Brother weasel had already worn his brown coat many moons. Besides, the stranger was larger than any weasel or muskrat; and *pure white*.

Musquash was not the only one whom the ghostly stranger had scared, for Quoskh the heron was so frightened that he never came to the lake now to dance upon the shore, or drive his stakes. The neglected flagroot patches in the marsh grew dry and coarse and went to seed because no one pulled them, for no sooner did the muskrats visit the marshes than the awful ghostly, clicking thing was sure to appear to them.

One there was, however, who still had courage to roam abroad nights; this was none other than brave Mahug, the great white loon. At first Mahug had been curious to know all about the ghost, so, from a safe thicket of rushes one night, he watched it closely. When every living thing had left the lake in fright, then the ghost-like stranger would come boldly forth and leisurely swim out to where the lily pads grew thick. Mahug saw it drag forth great

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tangles of lily roots, swim back to shore, and devour them eagerly. So it happened, Mahug watching each night saw the ghost, and in time he became so accustomed to it that, full of courage, he would fly right over the ghost's back, screaming down "hoo-hoo-hoo," jeering, calling, "whose afraid of you?"

All this time Musquash and his tribe and all the dwellers in the muskrat lodges were having a bad time. They were almost afraid to leave their beds for food, and some of them were so thin their fur coats fitted them loosely. Finally, Musquash called together a council in the big lodge, and the muskrats decided that things had come to such a pass they would best go forth, desert their old village, and seek a place where there were no strange ghosts to trouble them. So choosing a night when the moon was dark, lest the Jeebi follow them, Musquash led his tribe afar off, where they found another swamp and built new lodges.

This was not brave, but cowardly. Musquash and his tribe might well have stayed right there in their old, pleasant village. But you see Musquash was faint-hearted; he showed the white feather. For, had he but known, he would have discovered that the terrible Jeebi, the ghost, was nothing but just Unk-wunk himself. His quills and all his coarse hair had turned quite white with age, so that he had

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become that very rare thing in the woods—an albino porcupine.

Now when Unk-wunk's quills turned white he was shunned by all his kindred and so led a lonely, wandering life. Of course the clicking sounds which foolish Musquash, the faint-hearted, thought were the ghost's teeth gnashing, were made by the quilly armor of Unk-wunk, as it softly clashed and rattled together when he moved.

Mahug the loon was bravest. Well she knew all the time, that the Jeebi, the ghost, was just Unk-wunk. But Mahug was selfish, and so she was really glad when the muskrats deserted their village. Now Mahug and her mate have the shores all to themselves. Every night now she laughs in glee, screaming out, "Hoo-hoo-hoo," and Unk-wunk, the ghost of muskrat village, grubs happily for pond lily roots in the ooze of the pond, having to share them with no one, for not a single muskrat lodge around the lake is now occupied; the village is deserted.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOBLIN CRY OF MAHUG THE LOON

A PIERCING, goblin scream rang out across the moonlit waters of Lone Lake and echoed through the pines along shore. Little Beaver, hearing it, huddled still closer to the camp fire and shivered. The old chief, noticing his fear, laughed at him; called him a white feathered brave, a coward. "The cry which you hear is nothing fearful; it is just Mahug the loon calling his faithful mate. But listen, and you shall learn how the loon came to have such a strangely weird call."

Once, Mahug, a mother loon, came with her mate from the far south. She built her carelessly put together nest very close to the edge of the water, knowing well that when the baby loons were hatched, they must be near the water; for the first thing a loon thinks of is a swim and a dive.

Very wary was Mahug the mother loon, selecting a well-hidden spot. For all loons are very wild and shy; they cannot bear that their neighbors should spy upon them. Mahug did not know that near this

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particular spot where she made her nest, there were other neighbors. Some of them wore fur, and some feathers, these troublesome neighbors. If Mahug had but cast her golden eyes far above, she might have seen that on an overhanging cliff old Bald-head the eagle, whom she feared, had made his untidy nest, while right across on a small wooded island camped sly Nemox the fisher, another enemy.

“Kee-oo, kee-oo,” screamed the tribe of Ismaques the fish hawk, right over her head, as they circled, watching the ripples on the water for fish. But the loon was not afraid of the hawks; not until the small loons came would she watch them.

Came the pleasant Moon of Leaves, when the willows and alders along shore pushed out pale green sprouts and swinging tassels, and the sweetflags waved above the water edges their tender spear points. Then there were two black, fluffy baby loons in the twig nest of Mahug. Not until the Moon of Falling Leaves would these small loons wear such brave thick feathers as did the mother loon. The neck and head of Mahug was black and glossy, spotted with white. Most wonderful of all were her beautiful breast feathers, thick, and dazzling white as a pearl of the sea. About her neck was a band of black feathers.

The young loons were strong and lusty, and unlike most of the other wild birds, they did not have to

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be fed and tended for long, weary moons. They were quite able to leave the nest in three days, and hastened to waddle down and tumble straight into the water. Then Mahug gave them their first swimming lessons. For Mahug is the greatest known diver of all the water birds. She can stay under water longer than the grebe, the king fisher, or her cousins, the terns—all great divers.

One pleasant day Mahug and the downy little loons were playing in the lake. Patiently she would dive, her strong black webbed feet trailing behind her, showing them just how. And each time their mother dove the young loons would follow her motions with their bright beady eyes, staring curiously at the bright bubbles she left behind her. But always, no matter how they stared at the bubbles, up would come Mahug from quite another spot some distance away. Then she would flirt the water from her black wings and try it all over again. The small loons would try to dive then, but it was no use, for as soon as they thrust their heads under water their little pink webbed feet would wave wildly in the air, for they were still too young and light to dive as their mother had done.

So Mahug sank herself gently beneath the surface of the water, and coming up beneath the young loons she managed to land both of them upon her smooth broad back.

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Just about that time sly Nemox, the furry, blunt-snouted camper on the small island, pushed himself off silently into the water, swimming fast beneath. He had seen Mahug and the small loons, and hoped to slip right beneath her, catch her unawares, and pulling her quickly under water, drag her to his island home.

Just as Nemox sighted the beautiful pearl-white breast of Mahug right over his head, and had opened his cruel jaws to attack her, a clumsy mud turtle had to come scrambling in his road. The loon saw him then, for the turtle had betrayed him. In sudden panic she made a swift movement, upsetting the two small loons from her back into the water. So after all, Nemox managed to seize one of them, while old Baldhead the eagle, who was watching everything with his golden eyes, darted swiftly down from his cliff and carried off the other loon.

Then such a crying and clamoring as Mahug sent out, when in despair she could find no trace of her fledgelings. Wildly she called, and soon her mate joined her. Then sorrowing, together the old loons flew over forest and lake, searching woods and water-ways for the little downy loons. Even at night the moonbeams fell across their snowy breast feathers as they hunted among the dark thickets, which little Wah-wah-tay-see, the firefly, kindly lighted for them at twilight.

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Mahug and his mate feared no arrow, for it takes a mighty hunter to wing a loon. Swifter than the swiftest arrow was Mahug when she dove, so always when an Indian's arrow aimed at her, she could dive before it hit the water, leaving just a circle of ripples behind to mock him. Then "he, he, he-he," would laugh Mahug, the hunted one, screaming derisively at him from afar off, for while he watched the rippling waters, Mahug would dive deeply, coming up afar off—to mock him and his arrows.

Mahug and her mate were faithful to each other, never going off and choosing other mates; so also are others true to one mate, the gulls, and brave Wa-Wa the wild goose. But that year the loons did not raise another brood, for they knew it would be too late; that their small wings would not be strong enough by autumn for the long migration flight to the warm south.

Came the Moon of Painted Leaves, the autumn, when the Great Spirit warns all the feathered ones to gather together their tribes, and follow the long, trackless sky-path, which he shows them, to the southlands, telling them to hurry, lest Péboam, the winter, catch them.

Then did Mahug and the bird tribes hold council together. One old warrior loon swam bravely about from group to group telling them how to form themselves and their warriors into rank and file, like ■

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mighty army, all ready for march. At last, when he had counceled a long time, with a loud call of command the old leader sprang straight and high into the air, calling hoarsely down to the others, and with a rushing of wide wings they all arose into the air, following his call.

Now afar off in the hot country toward which the migrating birds had flown, and where it is never bitterly cold, but warm and pleasant, there were many strange, savage hunters who wore war-paint and feathers. Most of all did they covet the feathers of Mahug the loon, for their war plumes. Their arrows were very swift, and so it happened that one of their arrows struck the brave mother loon, even before she could dive. Right against her ringed neck she felt the sting of the arrow, but fortunately it did not slay her. Mahug dove quickly, straight down to the black river mud she dove, coming up in a spot far away from the arrows.

But quite unknown to Mahug the loon, a strange thing happened to her. No longer did her voice ring out clear and trumpet-like across the lake, nor did it ever again sound like the call of her tribe. By some cruel trick the arrow had pierced her neck strangely so that when she screamed forth her challenge, calling her mate, her voice, which before had not been unmusical, was not like the voice of anything on earth.

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It began, that goblin cry, like the wail of Pekompf the wildeat, mourning at night when he is lonely. Next, it sobbed like the whispering wail of Koos-koos-koos the great owl, who calls to the moon, and the end of the loon's wail came as the moaning of Wa-bun the east wind, as he wails among the poles of the tepee. That, ever after, was the strange cry which Mahug the loon made when she came back again to the lake in the northland.

Every living thing that heard the weird scream of Mahug the loon for the first time was frightened. Chep-la-hgan, the bald-headed eagle, as he came hulking along the shore, shaking out his silver hackles defiantly, and fearing no one, when he heard the loon's scream, arose into the air panic-stricken, and never fished near there again. Moween, hunting in the shallows for crawfish, raised her furry ears to listen, and then tore off into the deep woods; while sly Nemox the fisher left his home on the pebbly island. And so was Mahug the loon avenged for the loss of her little loons. Her frightful goblin screams, unlike anything they had ever heard, so frightened her enemies that they never molested her again.

Lonely lives led the loons; they never came in companies to the lake. But each year now just two arrive—Mahug and her mate. And you may often catch a glimpse of the two solitary loons as they

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quickly dive, throwing up fountains of silvery spray in their wake. But do not be a coward, hiding your head beneath your blanket, like a papoose who trembles when the voice of Wabun moans through the pine trees in the night. Nay, think always 'tis but solitary Mahug the loon, calling through the darkness to her mate; her strange goblin cry which no other bird can imitate.

CHAPTER V

YELLOW MOCCASIN AND THE WOLVES

"WHEN you were a boy, grandfather, were you never afraid when Malsun, the great hungry gray wolf, howled in the darkness of the forest?" asked Little Beaver, as they listened to a long drawn wolf howl, reaching their ears from the other side of the lake, which they were crossing in the canoe.

"Ha," grunted the old chief, good-naturedly, as he made the dripping water fly from his paddle like moon-lit diamonds. "Even an Indian boy shows the white feather at times. But it is through trials of his courage that a boy finally becomes a real brave, and wins as his reward the eagle's feathers in his hair.

"Once, when I was a boy, I had such a trial of strength and you may judge if I played the coward. Listen to the story."

My grandmother, named Eeh-nis-kin, or "the crystal stone," made for me a very wonderful pair of moccasins. No other boy of our tribe ever owned such a pair. Soft dressed were the deer-skins which

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she used, and stained a bright yellow. With the bright juices of the blood-root plant were the skins stained. You may often see the blossoms of this plant in the forest in the Moon of Leaves, as like white stars they gather in the hollows.

Wrought with much skill and cunning were the embroideries upon my wonderful moccasins, decked with the shining quills of Kagh the hedge-hog, and even the quills were yellow, so that my moccasins were as bright from toe to heel as the moon to-night is yellow.

The first time I wore my yellow moccasins was at a great festival held by our tribe, and so fleet of foot was I in the races, that I was named after that, "Yellow Moccasin, the swift runner."

As I grew older I became more brave, deserting the lodge fires and the company of the dogs, little children and the squaws, to take my rightful place among the elders. When Péboam sent the whirling snows, I was the first one to tie on my snow shoes and take part in the great celebration—the wild dance of the snow shoes, which we Indians dance at the first snow-fall. Singing our songs of rejoicing, thanking the Great Spirit for sending the snow, that the animal trails may show more plainly and that we may lightly skim the frozen crusts in the hunt.

It was the season of Muk-kuks, which is the time for boiling the sweet waters of the maple, when a

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party of our tribe started off on a hunt. "Indian file," I followed on my pony with the others, as I had been taught, so to bewilder the wild things, who, seeing one trail, would never suspect that more than one Indian had passed that way. Full of wise lore had I become by this time, and my ears were always open and as keen to hear as Eleemos, the red fox, who even listens while he sleeps. -

My pony was white, spotted with brown, and proud of him I was, as bravely I rode him, my long bow slung across my shoulder, and my yellow moccasins on my feet. Our way was long, for we were after big game because we needed pelts badly. Over mountains and through deep passes we journeyed, making our camps by pleasant waters. One day I joined a big hunt, but my pony lagged, and some of the braves thought I was too small to follow the long, rough trail, so the next day I was left behind near camp to hunt rabbits for myself.

Now it was none other than Wabasso, a big buck rabbit, who first got me into trouble, by leading me a long, wild chase into deep, strange woods, where at last I completely lost the trail. I was now on foot following Wabasso blindly, until, to my dismay, I began to see the long, purple shadows of Gushkewau, the night, come creeping around me like spirits. Then very quickly I turned back upon the trail, trying to make my way back to camp.

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Alas, I was in a strange, new country which I had never been accustomed to, and before very long I had reached a wild marshy tract. This I tried vainly to cross over, but could find no firm foothold. So, after many weary hours of searching for the lost trail, I climbed into a great, white-spotted sycamore tree, and there I fell asleep upon a wide limb.

Day came at last, and stiff and sore I climbed down from the tree where I had clung all night. Then, close at hand I suddenly heard the mighty bellow of a giant bull moose. I had just time and wit enough to climb back into my friendly sycamore tree, when, mad with fear, I saw the great moose plunge straight out of the scrub spruces and make for my hiding place. Then, as I stared, I saw he was in trouble, being chased by some enemy whom he feared. The next instant I heard the long hunting cry of Malsun and his pack; the wolves were after the moose.

Now the moose was noble, and a mighty chief among his tribe. His antlers branched like giant tree trunks from his great head, and he roared loudly in a very savage way. Instantly he had spied me and my bright yellow moccasins hanging down from the tree, and with a roar which shook the forest, he charged for my perch, but I managed to climb nimbly beyond his reach. His eyes were red with hate and fear, and he tore up the earth with hoofs

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and horns as he vainly tried to reach me. But soon his attention was taken from me, for the poor moose was obliged to turn about and try to protect himself, as with long-drawn howls of joy and hunger, Malsun and his wolf pack suddenly burst forth from the distant forest, and crossing the marsh which lay between them and their prey, they soon surrounded the old moose. Snapping, leaping and worrying him, they came in hordes—long, slim, half-starved things, while the moose bravely turning, tried to fight them off as they came at him. High he tossed the wolf leader on his giant horns again and again, while shivering in my yellow moccasins, I watched the awful battle below me. Which would win?

Never did I see such a noble fight as the poor moose made for its life, as the wolf tribes fought, and tried to tire him out. But at last the brave moose decided to give up the fight, and with one great shoulder torn and bleeding, he turned about, and made for the woods on a long lope, the wolves still following him, so I did not see the end.

As soon as the wolf pack left the swamp I climbed quickly down from the tree, although my listening ears still could hear their long “whoo-oo-ooo” from the forest. I was very hungry, and I set about to find some berries and sweet bark, which I munched, and to drink from a clear spring of water. Then, once more, I tried to find the lost trail, but even

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before I reached the forest, once again I heard the howling wolves. They were returning to the swamp, so giving up my search, again I sought the friendly sycamore and climbed into it. There I stayed another long, dismal night, while the wolves camped beneath me. Plainly enough I could see their gray skulking forms beneath the tree, hear the snapping of their long cruel teeth, and catch the gleam of their glowing eyes, gleaming in the darkness like the yellow lamps of Wah-wah-tay-see, the little firefly, as they watched me.

Of course I dared not climb down from my friendly tree, although by this time I was becoming faint with hunger and loss of sleep. At last I saw the welcome yellow rays of dawn come stealing up over the mountain, and I hoped that some of the hunters would come and find me. But no, they did not come. For an Indian boy must not lose his way in the forest, and I was no longer looked upon by the tribe as a papoose. The fact was, my companions in the hunt had grown tired of that camp, and as my pony had strayed, not finding me, they reasoned that I had become weary of being left behind, and gone home alone, ahead of them.

When the shadows once more lifted in the swamp, I soon saw that the great hungry wolves had again gone off to the forest. For, unless on a keen hunt, and very desperate with hunger, they usually slink

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away to their lairs at daybreak. Once more I quickly climbed down from the tree and for hours I wandered, in hopes of finding the lost camp. When at last I reached it, I saw nothing but black firebrands, long cold. The hunters had gone.

Search as I might, I was somehow unable to pick up the lost trail, so another night, when the long blue shadows came creeping down from the black mountain into the forest, to escape Malsun and the wolf pack, I again climbed into a tree. But the next day at dawn, I managed to strike the old home trail, and weak and spent I tottered over it. Pleasant was the first sight of our lodge poles against the distant sky line.

And when, from the village, they saw my ragged figure come creeping like an old man towards the lodge, then the old squaws ran to meet me, for I was to them as one come back from "The Happy Hunting Grounds." They had mourned me as dead for two suns. But they washed my wounds tenderly, as they listened to my story, giving me food, the best in the lodge, and their eyes were wet with pity for me. But my old grandmother proudly bade them cease weeping, chiding them, scolding them for their pity and weak tears.

"Nay," said she, "it is well with Yellow Moccasin, for he has become a brave. The three nights which he spent in the forest alone, with Malsun and the

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wolf pack, watched over by the Great Spirit, is for him 'good medicine.' What he suffered there, alone in the darkness, shall but serve to make of him one day a mighty chief. He shall surely wear one day the war eagle's feather in his hair, for he has been tested."

Then my grandmother, Eeh-nis-kin, the crystal stone, as a reward, and to show her pride in me, fashioned for me a pair of yellow moccasins still more wonderful than the first had been; for my old ones had been torn to rags in my travels. And ever after that time of terror, my three lonely nights in the forest among the wolves, I was looked upon by the other boys of the village with respect. And strange to say I was nevermore a coward, neither did I shiver or feel afraid in the darkness, or when I heard the long-drawn, hungry cry of Malsun and his wolf pack as alone I followed the forest trails.

CHAPTER VI

HOW THE SNOWY OWLET BECAME A GREAT BRAVE

FAR up in the Northland, on the side of a mountain, where the tall spruces and hemlocks bend and groan beneath the fierce storms which rage there, lived Koos-koos-koos, the great snowy owl, and his mate. Each year they raised their brood in the same spot. Fierce they were by nature, and when there were two young owlets in the nest, few cared to risk the anger of these mighty rulers of the ledges.

But if the great owls were savage to outsiders, none could be more gentle than could old Koos-koos-koos to the round-faced, snowy balls—the little owlets. And with much patience the old owls early taught them to fly, because the little owlets had such fierce appetites that often, though very strong, the old owls would hunt all night long, returning at dawn to rest, wing weary and cross.

It was an exciting day when one owlet, bolder than its brother, managed to climb to the edge of the nest, raise its short stubby wings, and flop and flutter to the ground. But this adventure so terri-

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fied the other owlet, that with a little hiss of fear he tumbled back into the nest.

In vain the old owls tried to toll forth the timid owlet. Hovering nearby they would dangle a mouse temptingly nearer and nearer, screaming and urging, seeming to say— "Come and get your supper, timid one, if you wish it." But the foolish little owlet was too lazy; he preferred to be fed by the old owls than fly forth from the nest.

From the first, the mother owl showed her fondness for the brave owlet who first flew. Often, the devoted mother would snap up a white moth, then flutter back to the piney woods, searching the shadows with her great yellow eyes for her favorite, just to give him the tempting morsel. But the brother owlet continued lazy and stupid. Never would he become a great brave, huddled in his feathers lazily, waiting to be fed.

His disposition was ever like brother bear with a thorn in his paw, and he dearly loved to pick a fight with his brother. Snapping his beak crossly, he would try to nip at his small ear tufts, which began to show. Hissing like a serpent he would struggle, trying to take away his food.

One night the selfish owlet went off alone and never came back. He had such an enormous appetite that he foolishly tried to carry off a bob-cat's kitten. Then, had you peeped inside the bobcat's den after-

HOW THE OWLET BECAME A BRAVE

wards you would have seen the kittens cuffing about and playing with many soft white feathers—all that was left of the selfish owlet.

Finally, the brave owlet went off by himself to hunt over the trails, for there comes a time when young owls take up a roving, solitary life. Then the nest in the singing pine was again empty. About this time, which was the glowing season of the Painted Leaves, came the Frost Spirit down in the swamps. Crimson were the cranberries among the tussocks. At sunset chilly mists drifted up through the passes, which before morning turned to snow, so at sunrise things were white and sparkly. The Moon of Snow Shoes had come, and now everything sought shelter from the wild storms.

Now Koos-koos-koos and his mate did not migrate with other birds, for their soft white feathers thickened, and they were warmly clad. Often the fierce breath of the tempest swept them far off their course, out into the open. Then they would shelter in some thick pine covert, where they stayed until the storm was past, feeding upon cedar and pine buds, breaking them from icy sheathings.

The great Storm Spirit had been abroad for five suns. Snow whirled in the passes; coated with ice were the twigs of evergreen, and the snow drifts were so glazed and slippery that no wild thing could keep its feet. Koos-koos-koos and his mate, hud-

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dled for days in their soft white feathers, were now almost wild with famine.

At last the moon bravely showed itself, its white rays turning all the forest into a wonderful glittering fairy-land. But the owls did not care for this; instead, they spread forth their broad wings, skimming low over the ice-sheathed snow, their golden eyes searching beneath every low-hanging spruce where a fat rabbit might hide, or even a young raccoon.

Flying all through the night until they were wing-weary, the mother owl finally flew off alone to the edge of a distant spruce forest, which showed black against the snow. There in the point of a spruce, she searched the open for game. Just as the sun cast a faint yellow gleam across the snow, a young rabbit poked its long ears from a snow-bound burrow. Instantly the blazing eyes of the hungry owl saw it, and hovering above it, she was making ready to dart down upon the rabbit, when Kagax the weasel, slim and white, whose wicked eyes had been watching the prey, seized it in his jaws. The rabbit had been taken by surprise; had it been able to use its strong hind legs to advantage, Kagax would not have caught it so readily.

All this time, the mother owl, now frantic with hunger, hovered in the air, jealously spying the triumph of Kagax the weasel, whose dirty-white coat

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made a dark blot upon the spotless snow. Suddenly the weasel saw the owl above him, and raising his small three-cornered head, drawing away his lips until his fangs showed, yet never loosening his hold upon the rabbit, he hissed forth a challenging snarl at the owl, then turned back to his prey.

By this time the mother owl could no longer control her anger and hate; with a sudden rush of her wings she swooped down upon Kagax the weasel. Snapping her beak and hissing, she buried her talons in his back, striking, beating him with her snowy wings; trying to wrest from him the slain rabbit. Almost smothered was Kagax by the great wings of the owl, but he fought back, and finally was forced to let go his hold of the rabbit. Then Kagax turned himself swiftly and struck with his fangs into the great soft breast of the owl, and clung there.

Bewildered and hurt, the mother owl's wide wings beat the air as she swiftly rose from the ground, while Kagax the hateful, cruel one still clung to her feathered breast, which now began to show scarlet with her blood. In vain did the owl try to rid herself of her enemy; almost she seemed to have lost her wits, as she flew back and forth over the wide snow plains.

Had she but thought to fly to the distant forest, then she might have had the weasel at an advantage, for she could have soon settled upon a limb and

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beaten the life out of Kagax. But in the air, Kagax had her at his mercy.

The mother owl was fast becoming weaker and weaker, and although she still fanned the air with her wings, soon she must fall to earth. This was just what the weasel hoped for. But at this critical moment another was coming to her aid. Away over in the edge of the pines where dark shadows still hung, a great white bird came slowly winging its way. It was a young owl, but a very large one. Soon its watchful glowing eyes scanning the open saw the battle going on in the air. Then with a swift circular swoop of its great wings, the young owl changed its course, and dropping from the sky it fell upon the weasel, clutching it in a grip of iron with its yellow talons. Then the terror of the woods loosened its cruel jaws, falling limply to the ground.

Off to the distant pines flew the two great snowy owls, mother and son. For the young owl who had beaten sly Kagax the weasel and saved the old owl from a cruel death, was none other than the brave owlet who had first learned to fly forth from her home nest. He it was who had learned the secrets of the forest from patient old Koos-koos-koos, while the other, his brother, had sulked and idled like a dog who is sick.

The mother owl at once recognized her favorite, because, you must know, she had always remembered

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a certain little tuft of dark feathers which had grown upon his round head like a war plume, even when he was a very young owlet.

Always full of courage when young, this owlet had now become strong and fearless, and a mighty brave, saving his old mother from their enemy, Kagax the weasel, terror of the woods.

CHAPTER VII

THE STORY OF MOOWEESUK THE RACCOON

It was the beginning of the Moon of Snow Shoes; already the snow lay over the wide open places like a white robe. As Little Beaver and the chief trod lightly over the glassy crusts, the snow tinkled musically under their snow shoes. But in the deep woods the snow was softer and more velvet-like, while here and there, crossing and re-crossing, ran many mysterious tracks made by the wild things.

If you understood, you could tell just where Cheekhes the mink had passed, by his chain-like trail. Lhoks the panther left four deep holes, and behind them a strange mark which was made by the dragging of his tail upon the snow. But Upweekis the lynx left but four tracks, for his tail had been bobbed.

"Hugh, that's a strange track," observed Little Beaver curiously. "See, some little wild brother leaves *three* hand-like footprints. What does he travel on the three legs for?"

"Well you may ask," replied the chief. "Old Moo-wee-suk, my ancient friend, has again passed

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this way. Lo, he wanders over the trails like an old man with tottering footsteps. His track is not four footprints because once he lost all the toes of one hind foot in a trap. His trail is now strange. Listen, and I will tell you of Moo-wee-suk, little brother of the bear."

Once, when I was a boy, I happened to be off in the forest alone, and by chance I stumbled across the secret trail of a trapper. An Indian boy, one of our tribe, set many snares to catch the furry brothers, because pelts we must have in our lodges in winter, or suffer.

For myself, I hated the traps because I loved all the wild kindred and dreaded to think of their sufferings. When caught in some trap far off in the forest, they died in agony, or endured long tortures while their feet were held in the sharp bite of the traps. Better swift death by the arrow than slow torture, thought I

That day when I came across the secret trap, I first saw strange marks on the tree trunks; they had been cut about twenty paces apart. The cuts were placed higher than were the marks made for a game trail. I knew what they meant, those secret markings. Some wary trapper had made them. At last I came to a bent twig; I was getting closer to the traps. Soon I reached the brook where I found a

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poplar stick stuck into the ground, and it was bent until it touched water. My sharp eyes soon saw a birch ring which had been tied to the poplar stick, and then I knew this meant that the trap was set right beneath the bank where I stood.

But I needed no guide, for my ears caught a queer, agonized, whimpering cry like a papoose in pain, and then I knew some wild thing had been caught and was suffering. Slipping quickly down the bank, there I saw Moo-wee-suk, a young raccoon, held fast in the jaws of the trap by a hind foot.

As I looked upon his misery, hatred was in my heart for the cruel trapper. Little Moo-wee-suk, trusting me, knowing I was his friend, looked straight into my face out of his greenish golden eyes, already filmed with agony. Black circles ringed his beautiful eyes; his coat was fine and soft and deep as grain in summer; while his plume-like tail was ringed about with five jet black rings. And as I looked upon Moo-wee-suk, wondering what I should do, he laid his black, pointed snout upon his little hand-like fore paws, and wept like a papoose who is lonely in the darkness.

Of course I could not stand there idle and see little Moo-wee-suk suffer. So, without another thought, I dared touch another's trap. Against all Indian codes was this rash act, but I cared not—I meant to save my new friend. So, very gently I took his paw from



"MY MOCCASINS WORE A TRAIL EACH DAY TO HIS LODGE IN THE DARK
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the cruel teeth of the trap. Alas, he could not travel, for he had long been held there a prisoner and his foot was terribly crushed and sore. But like a brother he treated me, never offering to bite me with his sharp teeth, although I had to hurt him. And so because Moo-wee-suk, this wild thing, showed his faith in me, an Indian boy, as I held him in my arms I whispered into his round black ear softly.

“Ah, ha, little brother to the bear, I know you; you can trust me for I shall never betray you to your enemy.” And lest the trapper spy upon us, I took a secret trail leading into the deep black forest. Then I looked to find a lodge for my friend.

The limbs of the pine grow upward, those of the hemlock tree straight out, but the spruce is friendly; its limbs droop to the earth, forming a natural wigwam for many a little wild thing. So beneath a friendly spruce wigwam I left Moo-wee-suk. But my moccasins wore a trail each day to his lodge in the dark forest, for I carried him food and looked after his wounded foot. To my sorrow, he lost all the little black toes of the hurt foot, but soon managed to hobble upon three legs, and one day when I reached his lodge, pushing aside the curtains of spruce, calling softly to him, I found he had gone back to his tribe. But I had not lost Moo-wee-suk forever, for each year during the feast of young corn, he came back with his kindred to eat of the

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milky ears. I knew his track well by this time, for it was different. Often on moonlight nights I would listen for his strange, whimpering cry. It was not unlike the ghostly wail of Kupkawis, the little brown owl, when he is lonely.

Much mischief did Moo-wee-suk, my friend, do in one night's feasting among the corn. Finally the dogs of the village were sent forth to drive away the raccoons from the corn. One dog, kin to a wolf, and a mighty hunter, finally got on the trail of old Moo-wee-suk. I knew Wabun, this wolf dog, would kill my friend if he ever caught him, and so one moonlight night I followed the dog, trying to protect Moo-wee-suk.

But I need not have feared for him, for by this time my friend was older and wiser. I reached the brook, and right out in the middle of a deep pool I spied old Moo-wee-suk. He sat upright, busily washing an ear of corn. For the raccoon is named "Lotor the Washer" because he rinses everything he eats before feasting.

Wabun the wolf dog soon saw Moo-wee-suk, and that same instant the green eyes of the raccoon spied the dog. Dropping his corn, he sat up straight, his little wet black paws held close against his breast, while his eyes blazed forth a challenge. As Wabun took to the water, swimming boldly towards the rock where the raccoon sat, Moo-wee-suk bared all

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his sharp teeth and snarled savagely. Now the dog was a great brave; he meant to have the raccoon. But no sooner did Wabun reach the flat stone than Moo-wee-suk sprung upon him like lightning. With his strong, hand-like paws he seized the head of Wabun the wolf dog, clinging to it with mighty strength that did not let go. Down under the deep waters of the pool Moo-wee-suk held the head of the wolf dog until bubbles began to arise upon the face of the water. Then did the brave raccoon loosen his hold upon his enemy, and return once more to the washing of his corn. Wabun the wolf dog would never follow the trail of the raccoon again.

Each spring I would meet my old friend. Moo-wee-suk always saw me but he went right on fishing for crawfish, or root digging along the water-ways. He did not mind me. Once when I had halted beneath a giant pine where it was very silent, right in the deep woods, I suddenly heard a soft familiar whimpering overhead, and a faint scratching. A shower of cones fell upon my head, and I glanced up curiously to see the quaint face of Moo-wee-suk peering playfully down upon me over a limb of the tree. He had found an abandoned woodpecker's hole and hollowed it out for himself. There he lived all alone.

Moo-wee-suk was now old, and his teeth were broken and dull. This I knew because I often found

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corn and other things which he had tried to gnaw. Gradually, too, his thick coat became faded, and when I now saw him in the moonlight he looked silvery and white. He is still alive, my ancient friend. No dog of the village has ever been able to slay him.

Soon after hearing the story of old Moo-wee-suk, Little Beaver heard the boys telling strange tales of seeing a ghost-like thing which came prowling forth upon moonlight nights upon the ledges. They told fearsome tales to each other of the weird cries which they heard when they went forth to hunt Wabasso the hare. More than one coward shivered in his blanket before the lodge fire when they heard these stories, for not all Indian boys are brave.

As for Little Beaver, well enough he knew now that it was just old Moo-wee-suk out upon the trails. Perhaps, thought Little Beaver sorrowfully, Moo-wee-suk mourns to himself because his teeth are now few and he cannot feast upon the young corn, and that his steps now totter like an old man so he cannot follow his tribe.

Often after that, Little Beaver would leave husked corn nearby the trails over which the old raccoon traveled. He saw his silvery figure steal in and out among the black spruce trunks, and often caught the shine of his fiery eyes, gleaming through the spruce

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brush, like Wah-wah-tay-see the firefly, as he flits in the darkness. Perhaps, thought Little Beaver, he is trying to find his old friend, the chief.

Then Little Beaver would call gently across the shadows, "Ha, I see you Moo-wee-suk; do not hide from me, little brother of the bear; I will not betray you, for I also am your friend."

Then listening, Little Beaver would hear a soft answering whimper, and he knew that old Moo-wee-suk the ancient one, had heard him and understood.

CHAPTER VIII

HOW THE BOBCAT WON HIS NAME

Just outside the wigwam Little Beaver's grandmother was preparing the supper of fish. Deftly she split the wood with a wedge of elk horn, using a stone mallet as she struck the wedge. Round stones she set between the sticks, and when the stones were hot, then the fish was broiled.

"Ha," laughed Little Beaver, "Skootum, the painted trout I caught, for supper." Little Beaver was proud of his fishing.

The old chief was dressing a pelt of Pekompf the bobcat, for a warm coat for the boy when should come the bitter cold—the season of Snow Shoes.

"Why does Pekompf the bobcat wear such a short tail, grandfather, when all his brethren—Lhoks the panther, Musquash the muskrat, and others—have long tails?" asked Little Beaver curiously.

"Ho, ho, curious one," chuckled the chief. "Pekompf does not wear his tail short to escape the Jeebi—the ghosts—or his enemies, as you think, but for quite a different reason. Listen and you shall learn."

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Pekompf the bobcat was always a great angler. Not content with catching small fish, always he must kill the great ones. But whenever he did chance to catch a small fish, instead of throwing it carefully back into the water to swim away, old Pekompf, the wanton one, would snap it in two with his sharp teeth and toss it aside to die.

At that time Pekompf wore his tail as long as did Lhoks the panther. He was mighty, and king of all the wildcat tribes, but he lived alone in a den overlooking a valley. This he did because he was selfish and knew if he lived with others he would have to divide his game with them.

So keen was the sight of Pekompf that his yellow eyes saw everything which went on down in the valley. On an overhanging rock he would lie quite flat watching the fish rise and leap in the water, far beneath. He could see the shimmer of their silvery sides as they broke the ripples of the water. Then, watching them, he would eagerly scramble off his rock and start to fish. And so skillful and crafty was the bobcat at his fishing, that when he left that stream there were no more fish left in that spot.

Finally all the fishers of the water-ways held council together and drew lots to decide who among them should punish old Pekompf the wildcat, and perhaps teach him better manners. It fell to the lot of sly Eleemos the red fox to do this, and well

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did he manage. Sly and crafty are the ways of the fox, so he kept all his plans to himself, but behind his pointed red ears his brain was busy plotting.

All through the pleasant Moon of Falling Leaves old Pekompf went about as usual, hunting and fishing, and still the fox let him go his way, apparently not noticing the wildcat at all. But the fox was just biding his time, which had not yet come; for already the quick-witted fox had made a splendid plan to punish Pekompf.

Finally the pleasant month passed by; gone were the painted red leaves, and Eleemos watched the wild black geese as they flew off through the windy autumn skies. Already many of his fur-coated friends had tucked themselves snugly in their winter dens; the woodchucks had closed their doors tight; so of course they would fish no more. But still the otters, beavers, and others who roam the forest and fish all winter, were about.

Not until the latter part of the Moon of Falling Leaves, September, did the mighty Frost Spirit come in earnest. When he first arrives he just nips the little black grapes which Eleemos loves, making them doubly sweet and spicy; and then is the time we in the lodges begin to splice the deer skin thongs of our snow shoes, and mend our snares. Then too do the wild kindred prepare for winter; their coats thicken and become more glossy.

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That autumn while Eleemos the fox feasted well on the little frost-touched grapes, he never forgot his plans, or the task before him, although some of the wild kindred thought he had done so. By and by came whining and scolding the winds of Winter. Through the flaps of the lodges he entered, blowing his keen breath everywhere. Long had he tarried. Then the ice began to coat the little streams thinly and every day now sly Eleemos the fox came jauntily down to the pond to test the thickness of the ice, and see if it was strong enough to bear his weight.

One day when he came there, as he crossed the little streams the ice did not break and tinkle beneath his feet, and out on the pond he saw the ice was black and thick. Then Eleemos found a sharp stone, and carrying it to the center of the pond in his mouth, he cracked a hole in the ice. Then seating himself nearby he watched and waited for old Pekompf to come to the pond to fish.

He had not to wait long. Soon he spied the furry, pointed ears of Pekompf above the frost-bitten reeds along shore; he was coming to fish. Then, quick as a flash, with a sly grin to himself, the fox dropped the end of his long bushy tail right through the hole which he had made in the ice. Fine bait—soon Eleemos drew out a flopping fish. Again and again did the fox angle, using his tail for bait. And all this time the fox knew quite well that old

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Pekompf was watching him enviously from behind the rushes.

Then foolish Pekompf went to a thin place in the edge of the ice and tried to fish with his paws, but not a fish did he get. Envious and greedy was the wildcat by this time, as he glared and glared with jealous green eyes at the fox. But sly Eleemos only grinned as he snapped up fish after fish with his lean jaws.

Then Pekompf the wildcat thought perhaps if he should change his position and fish through an air hole, using his tail for bait, as did the fox, he would have better luck. Now Pekompf was too lazy to break a hole in the ice as the fox had done, and fish in deep water, so he found another air hole away over in the edge of the stream. Noting that the fox had now left off fishing Pekompf was glad.

Old Pekompf sat there for a long time with his tail through the ice but never a nibble did he get. At last he thought perhaps if he went to the hole which the fox had fished through he might have better luck. Accordingly, Pekompf started to leave the air hole, but, to his horror he found he could not stir an inch from the spot. At the same time, feeling what he imagined was a fish nipping his tail, he tried to pull up the nibbler. But alas, that which had nipped the tail of Pekompf the wildcat was simply old Jack Frost, who all the time had been

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freezing and biting the tail of the wildcat fiercely.

Howling with rage and pain and spitting crossly, old Pekompf soon knew that something dreadful had happened to him. All in a panic he began to tug and pull, but it was in vain; try as he might he could not stir from the air hole because Jack Frost the sly one had frozen his tail solidly into the ice and was holding it tight.

Off in the edge of the dry rushes, just within sight and hearing, sat none other than his enemy, sly Eleemos the fox, grinning with delight over the plot which he had so cleverly carried out. For you see, old Pekompf the wildcat had been far too lazy to break a hole in the thick ice for himself as the fox had done, so fished through an air hole beneath which shallow water stood. But the fox had selected more wisely, for where the water is swift and deep it does not freeze below the ice line; the current keeps the water moving at a certain depth below. Pekompf the idle one, too lazy to break the thick ice, fished on the edge of the stream where there was no current. That was why his tail had frozen solidly into the ice, while the crafty fox, grinning, escaped to the woods to carry the news to the others.

Old Pekompf did not free his tail from the ice until all the furry ones of the water-ways had witnessed his humiliation. There he sat, held a pris-

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oner in the strong ice, filling the woods with his angry yells.

Finally, unable to endure the torture longer, with a wild yell of rage Pekompf the wildcat was forced to break away from the ice, but he left most of his tail behind him in the grip of Jack Frost. So was old Pekompf, now known as the *bobcat*, punished for his selfish ways. And to this day he wears his tail short, while his voice has never recovered its old note. He screams terribly, always with a cracked note in his voice, and now he and all the cat tribes hate water; they seldom swim, although they are still fond of fish and haunt the water-ways. But never do they fish through the ice. So was old Pekompf the bobcat taught a lesson which has lasted well.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN THE SNOW SHOES OF THE LYNX FAILED HIM

WABASSO the hare leaped high, crossing the trails, and Little Beaver seeing his long shadow in the moonlight, quickly fitted an arrow.

“Stay,” spoke the chief softly; “ ’tis only Wabasso. Let him live. He flies fleetly, his long ears laid close to his back, as he glances over his right shoulder, expecting perhaps to hear the swish of gliding snow shoes in pursuit.”

“Why does Wabasso always flee so swiftly, and strain his ears to catch the sound of snow shoes following him?” asked Little Beaver. Then the chief began the story of Wabasso the hare, and his long race with Upweekis the lynx.

Once Wabasso carried his long ears erect, not resting upon his back. His eyes did not bulge ever with fear, or his nose tremble because of terror, as now. But one great enemy he had, that was Upweekis, the great gaunt lynx. For Upweekis the cruel one, never missed an opportunity to injure Wabasso and his tribe.

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True, there were other enemies for whom Wabasso had to watch; Kagax the weasel, who so deftly changed his brown coat to white after the snow came, that the hare never could be quite sure whether he had seen him, or just a shadow upon the snow. Then of course there was Pekompf the wildcat; still, the wildcat sent forth such blood-curdling yells before he went upon the war path that Wabasso usually managed to escape, being warned.

But one year Upweekis, the great tufted-ear lynx, came straying down from the far North, and made his home right among the haunts of Wabasso the hare, and his tribe. Soon he began to make war upon the peaceful hares, and, in fact, hunted out and preyed upon every small, gentle creature which he could manage to capture or run down. Even the little dappled fawns he preyed upon until snow came, when, following the does, they went into their sheltering "yards," and were safe for the winter.

All through the autumn months, until the Moon of Falling Leaves, the sinewy feet of Upweekis were bare enough. But very gradually the long hair began to thicken and pad his powerful feet, so that by the time Péboam, god of winter, arrived, Upweekis was wearing a set of fine, matted snow shoes upon his four feet. So the thick glazed snow crusts just suited the lynx, who wore snow shoes far better than any Indian can make. While others of the

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wild broke through the crusts, floundering helplessly, Upweekis, grinning slyly, would squat upon his gray haunches and go sliding swiftly and independently off over the glittering snow plains, right in plain sight of his less fortunate neighbors.

Upweekis and his fierce mate made their home beneath a lofty ledge. Over this ledge stood a giant, blasted pine, and no matter how far Upweekis strayed from his home, the blasted pine standing high on the crag was such a fine landmark he never lost his bearings, but could always find his way home, even when his scent failed him.

The den of the lynx family was not inviting. It was dark, untidy, and strewn with discarded bones. But over in a dim corner were two little tawny lynx kittens, their soft fur faintly striped. Their round, curious eyes were golden yellow, and as they peered out of their dark corner they would mew fretfully like kittens, begging to be fed.

As the lynx kittens grew larger, before they were able to hunt for themselves, many of the helpless wild creatures began to suffer. Most of all did the tribe of Wabasso have troubles, for Upweekis liked nothing better than to carry a fine plump hare back to his tawny kittens. Sly Upweekis had a way of climbing into a tree having low-hanging limbs, over some run-way of the hares. There he would lie stretched flat upon a broad limb, only the tips of

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his pointed, tasseled ears, and his gleaming yellow eyes showing. Upweekis had no long tail to betray him by dangling over the limb, for he wears his tail bobbed. He could climb into a tree more rapidly than even an Indian boy, and his long tufted ears gave him an evil look. The long hair tufts were actually "feelers" which made his hearing extra keen, so that nothing which passed beneath the tree escaped him.

So, gradually, the tribe of Wabasso was destroyed by the crafty lynx, until the only one left of the great hare tribe was just poor old Wabasso himself, for many of his kindred were so terrorized by Upweekis the lynx, that they wandered off to another country. But not so Wabasso, the bravest hare of his tribe. He alone remained, determined if possible to conquer his enemy, the crafty Upweekis.

When winter came most of the wild things went to sleep, waiting for the hoarse crooning storms to pass. Finally, away off to the northwards traveled old Péboam, but he left a white snow blanket behind him. Then out began to creep all the little sleepy wild things for food. Among them all, none was hungrier than old Upweekis the lynx, for, although he could travel over the snow, that winter game had been hard to find, and he had already devoured most of the rabbit tribe.

Out came Upweekis, his matted snow shoes carry-

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ing him swiftly over the snow crusts which the frost had hardened like glass. Upweekis was so hungry he determined to satisfy his own selfish needs before taking back game to his waiting family. But luck was against him. True, he spied the waddling form of Moween the black bear, fishing through an air hole in the ice. But Upweekis did not go too near her, for once she had given him a badly scratched nose, the scar of which he still carried. So he made a detour around the pond, avoiding the bear. Upweekis was looking for easier game.

At last, to his delight, he struck a well-known, welcome trail; the wide, leaping trail of Wabasso the hare. Few could outrun Wabasso in a long race, and this Wabasso himself well knew. So he had made a plan to outwit the lynx by leading him a long, cruel chase, and if his plans worked, he would so wear out and punish Upweekis, his enemy, that he would leave him alone ever after.

This is how the long heart-breaking race began between Upweekis the lynx, and Wabasso the hare. It lasted many moons, and while Upweekis was thin and gaunt from long fasting, Wabasso the wise one had long before sought out the swamps, where he had feasted well on young willow sprouts, which were spring medicine for him and made him now feel strong and brave.

After the race had gone on for two suns, Upweekis

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was so spent and weary he had to crawl up into a tree to rest. He was careful to climb the tree, for he knew if he tarried below, some enemy would come upon him while he slept and injure him. For the lynx had many enemies by this time. So, wearily, Upweekis stretched out his lean, tawny body and fell into a deep sleep.

But while the lynx slept on, Shaw-on-da-see, the warm south wind, came blowing its breath gently through the forest, and stopped just long enough to touch the hard snow crusts, softening them and making them dissolve.

At last, just as the moon arose beyond the dark pines, Upweekis awoke from his nap, clawed himself down from the tree, and once again the long race began, for Wabasso the hare did not intend to give up his plan, and so had waited for the lynx, close at hand, in a spruce bush.

But the hare had gone but a short distance, when he failed to hear the "swish, swish," of snow shoes following him, and glancing back over his shoulder, Wabasso saw a funny sight. Instead of skimming fleetly over the snow crusts, there was Upweekis, his enemy, sunk right down into a deep snow drift, only his sharp tufted ears, and angry blazing eyes showing above the snow. At last Wabasso saw the lynx free himself with a mighty effort, and carefully picking out stronger places, take up the chase again.



"IT ENRAGED UPWEEKIS WHENEVER HE HAD TO HALT TO RID HIS FEET
OF THE CLOGGING SNOW, TO SEE WABASSO THE HARE
CALMLY SEAT HIMSELF TO REST"—Page 73

SNOW SHOES FAIL THE LYNX

Once more Wabasso failed to hear his pursuer, and glancing back, there he saw old Upweekis sitting upon a stump, savagely tearing out the soft snow balls that had formed between his hairy, matted claws. Again and again would the angry lynx have to stop the chase to rid himself of the troublesome snow balls between his toes. He would bite and snap and tear at his feet more impatiently and crossly each time he halted, until finally he became so angry he lost his head and actually began to bite into his own feet so deeply that when he again took up the chase, he left behind him at each step a bloody footprint upon the soft snow.

But that which enraged Upweekis most of all, whenever he had to halt to rid his feet of the clogging snow, was to see Wabasso the hare calmly seat himself to rest; waiting patiently for Upweekis to again take up the chase. Finally, the lynx, now weak from loss of blood, was obliged once more to lie down and rest. He determined to sleep until moonset, for then, perhaps, the frost would come and harden the snow crusts once more so he could travel more fleetly.

Now Wabasso the hare saw his enemy asleep beneath an overhanging spruce bush and was glad. For you see the lynx was so weary he forgot to climb a tree. Then did Wabasso know that his time had come, and waiting until the lynx was fast asleep,

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Wabasso stole near his enemy, and when he had come quite close to Upweekis, the hare turned his back, and then swiftly he shot out his long, muscular hind feet. Straight into the back of the lynx he hurled them, and out across the valley, through the moonlight, shot Upweekis the lynx like an arrow from its bow. Some say he is still flying, fleeing from his enemy into a far country.

Then did Wabasso the hare pause to rest. With long silken whiskers quivering with laughter, the hare shook with glee. Ever since that day has the nose of the hare quivered and trembled. And always, now, every hare carries his long ears flat against his back, listening; for ever since the time when Wabasso the hare conquered his enemy the lynx, all his kindred listen with ears laid back—that they may catch the pursuing “swish-swish” of the snow shoes of Upweekis the lynx.

CHAPTER X

THE LEGEND OF THE WHITE STAG

"ARE there no Jeebi, or ghosts, Grandfather?" asked Little Beaver anxiously of the old chief.

The old chief shook his head wisely.

"But they say a Jeebi wanders through the deep canyon at night; many have seen this dreadful ghost-like thing. What is it?" persisted Little Beaver, glancing fearfully behind him, peering into the shadows timidly, where already the hollow voice of old Koos-koos-koos sounded through the mysterious darkness.

"Do not listen to the idle tales of either squaws or cowards," cautioned the chief, as Little Beaver stole nearer the cheerful firelight. "There are no ghosts, no Jeebi, in the dark canyon."

"Whose voices then are those which wail and cry all night, down in the canyon?" questioned Little Beaver, shivering at the mere thought.

"Ho, ho," chuckled the chief derisively. "'Tis but the voice of Wabun, the east wind, shut up in the depths of the canyon. He wails and shouts hoarsely, trying to get out," explained the old man.

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"But they say there is a great, white, leaping thing, which comes down from the high places on the mountain, to roam in deep canyons, where not even an Indian's moccasin may tread," went on Little Beaver, still afraid.

"Hugh," grunted the chief, "I would not have you faint-hearted or cowardly, afraid of the shadows, or the wailing voice of Wabun, the east wind. Listen, and you shall hear about this terrible Jeebi, this ghost of which the idle tell so many tales," commenced the old chief. "'Tis the story of Hetokh the stag, and very, very old. Then, when you have heard it, you shall learn to laugh at the darkness, as I did, when a boy."

When Péboam, god of winter, reigned in the old days, he was stronger and younger than he is now. Like a mighty warrior he reigned, and his roaring shook the tallest pines of the forest, bending them like reeds. Then did he send the great snow storms whirling for days and days. The drifts piled deep in the deer passes, so that sometimes not until the Moon of Strawberries came, did the last snow melt away. In those days the wild, fur-clad of the forest suffered keenly, and their wits had to be sharp to keep them alive through the long, hard winters.

Hetokh, the great stag—he who led a vast herd—was big and brave. Each year when he cast his

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antlers, they broadened wider, so that when he tore over the trails, through the thick spruce bush, he carried them well thrown back against his red shoulders, lest their branching prongs catch in the underbrush and hold him back in his travels.

Well he knew what to do when the great droughts of summer came; when the earth was parched, and the forage dried out. Then he would lead the herd into secret places, where the bubbling springs were never dry, and the grass sprouted fresh and green.

But when winter came raging through the passes, even before it arrived, Hetokh wisely led his companions to the shelter of some dense thicket where they might safely "yard," until once more the pleasant Moon of Leaves came again. Old Hetokh had many enemies, and one of the worst was sly old Malsun, leader of the gray wolf pack, who ranged the timber lands, always savage and hungry. Then, too, Hetokh was sometimes very hard pressed, and at his wits' end, when the winter was very long, and famine came to the herd. At such times, even before it was time to leave the "yard," all the bark of the trees had long been stripped away as high up as the longest neck could possibly reach, and even gnawed down to the very wood, so hungry were the deer.

Then, in spite of warnings from the old leader, certain of his herd, quite starved out, would venture

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off into the canyons, only to die. Their slender legs would break through the hard snow crusts, and they had not strength enough left to free themselves. That was a great time for old Malsun; lightly could the wolves go skimming over the top of the snow, never breaking through, and so the deer, weak from hunger, were easily overcome by the great gaunt wolves.

One winter, or early spring, when Hetokh the old stag left his winter home, few were left to follow the old leader. And even those which followed were weak and starved, while the faded red coat of Hetokh himself was worn and thin, and his sides lean from his long fasting. But his spirit was still brave within him, as a warrior's should always be, and soon he was able to battle for himself as of old.

Hetokh led his gentle mate to a deep, beautiful canyon, where the birds sang, and all day the rabbits gamboled. Here the tall, rank ferns made them a resting place, and the brown pools were deep and sweet. The canyon was a secret spot, where they were well hidden; overhead they could look far up between the canyon walls, which were so tall that when Hawahak the hawk screamed loudly, "Kee-oo, kee-oo," it sounded but faintly far down below; like the echo of a scream it sounded.

Best of all, Hetokh and his mate loved the nights down there, for then came Wawonaissa, bubbling

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his "whip-*perri*-will, *perri*-will," sweetly among the shadows, while bats and hawks, and the owls flitted forth, so they were never lonely, down deep in their hidden canyon.

But all this time old Malsun, the gray wolf leader, was laying his hateful plans, plotting to see how he and his pack might safely get down into the canyon. One moonlight night the old wolf came out upon a high crag, far above the canyon, and howled and howled his long wolf cry. He was summoning the pack, and like long slim shadows they began to assemble from every direction. Then sly old Malsun showed them a *new* trail which for many moons he had been searching, which would lead them all safely down into the canyon.

Hetokh and his mate were resting innocently among the tall brakes and were completely taken by surprise when they were suddenly surrounded by Malsun and the wolf pack, who like ghosts had entered the canyon. Then, swinging his mighty antlers, arose the great stag in fierce anger; high he swung his branching weapons, and lunged straight into the hungry wolf pack. Charging upon them, he threw them aside like bundles of faggots left and right, and then, bleeding and torn, with a hungry wolf clinging by its long teeth to his flank, Hetokh made his way from the canyon, over his own secret

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trail, leaving behind his gentle mate, who had fallen an easy prey to the wolves.

“Who-oo-oo, o-o-o,” howled the hungry wolves, streaming close behind the wounded stag, who finally managed to dash aside the clinging wolf who hung to him. With mighty leaps Hetokh headed for the deep forest, for he knew there was water upon its far side. Nearer came the cry of the wolves; they were trailing him, the whole pack, with Malsun in the lead. Just then Hetokh reached the borders of the lake, and using all his wits, he gave a mighty leap; fully twenty-five feet he cleared at one bound, and plunged into the water. He had leaped thus that his feet might leave no tell-tale print near the water’s edge to show where he had entered the lake.

The flank of the stag was badly torn by the fangs of the wolf who had clung to him, but his shoulders were strong as his fore-feet clove the water, throwing the spray high as he swam very fast down stream. He did not make for the opposite shore, but kept on swimming down the lake, and finally climbed out upon the same side on which he had entered.

Soon the “who-o-o-o,” the rallying cry of the wolves, came to the stag’s ears; they had reached the spot where he had leaped, and now they were baffled, for, losing the scent where the foot-prints of Hetokh had ceased, they began to run about in

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circles foolishly; whining and snapping at each other crossly. But it was no use, for the stag had outwitted them. When at last the wolf pack left the trail of Hetokh, the moon had sunk below the rim of the canyon, and the old stag was miles and miles away in a safe spot.

There came a season when the hunters were many. This was in the Time of Falling Leaves, and the men came back to their villages laden with pelts for the squaws to cure, and eagle feathers for their war bonnets. Sometimes in the forest, quick, careless fires were built by the hunters and left to smoulder. Thus came the awful fire which swept the forest far to the northward. Through valleys and across mountains it swept, and all the wild things of the forest flew before it. Malsun the wolf and his pack, Moween the black bear and her cubs, Pekompf the wildcat, and many who were deadly enemies, now all fled together, forgetting their hate for each other; ahead of the great fire wall they ran, on and on.

Among them was Hetokh the stag. But he was now very old and weak, and his towering antlers caught in the tangled wilderness. He tripped and fell among the blackened, scorching embers, while the others tore past him, leaving him to his fate. But surely the Great Spirit watched over the old stag, for just in time, the flames were turned aside

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by the wind, which now came from another direction, and Hetokh the brave lived.

Sick and alone, he dragged himself into a deep pass between the ranges, where he lay for many moons, too weak to stir forth. His kindred were lost, and the old stag, with reddened, almost blinded eyes, searched the shadows longingly for them, but in vain.

Once more, when the snows came, Hetokh wintered in his old "yard," and when the breath of the mighty Frost Spirit began to sting him too cruelly, mercifully did the Great Spirit begin to clothe the stag with a new, thick coat, which changed his appearance completely.

At last came again the pleasant spring time. "Kruk, kruk, kruk," called Mitches, the partridge, whirring loudly on brown-barred wings past the stag's furry ears; while the little song sparrow bubbled his happy song over and over among the thorn bushes, and Hetokh was less lonely.

One night, as Hetokh the stag ambled slowly over the trails, halting to browse, or nip at the tender, budding saplings, or dip his velvety nose into some brown water hole, a skulking wolf stuck his long snout from between a clump of alders, catching his first glimpse of the old stag. Then something strange happened, for the wolf after one startled look at the stag, squatted trembling upon its

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haunches beside the trail, and stared and stared at the strange, ghostly vision near the pool.

After that one long look, which was quite enough for the wolf, it silently skulked away, its tail between its legs, the rough, coarse fur down its spine raised in fear, howling a dismal "wo-o-o-o," as it fled. But the stag, who had not seen the wolf, went calmly upon his way, and reaching a clearing, he climbed to a tall, overhanging cliff. There, his great antlers held high and proudly, with wheezing calls, he sent a summons across the deep valley to his kindred.

Now, as it happened, Malsun the wolf and his pack were always tracking the old stag. And that very night, down in the valley they gathered, waiting to attack him in a body. But as soon as Malsun their leader caught sight of Hetokh, he turned back, warning the pack. Whining, whimpering to himself, as the first wolf had done; like a papoose who is afraid, whined Malsun, telling his followers the strange thing he had seen—the ghost, the Jeebi, which had frightened him, standing on the cliff. Then howling, falling over each other in their haste to get away, the wolf pack ran to hide themselves in the deep forest.

Now that which frightened them was this: When the red fur coat of old Hetokh was burned from his back by the awful fire, and the Great Spirit clothed

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him anew, instead of coming in red as before, it became a beautiful, *pure white!*

Changed now is Hetokh the old stag, shunned and feared he is, as alone he goes wandering over the old trails. Through the deep canyons and across clearings he travels in the moonlight, ever seeking his lost mate, and even above the voice of Wabun, the east wind, you may hear his plaintive calls.

Spying Hetokh the white stag in his wanderings, wearing his ghostly white coat, the cowardly wolves huddle themselves close, to watch his passing, while the faint-hearted ones stare at him with affrighted eyes and cry, "See, the ghost, the Jeebi of the canyon passes." But the brave-hearted fear no ghosts, for there are no Jeebi but in the minds of wolves and cowards.

CHAPTER XI

BROTHER BEAR AND THE LITTLE LONE CUB

“THAT you may understand how unhappy one is when he thinks only of himself, and because he is proud and selfish, would rather roam the forests alone, than follow the trails with his kindred; I will tell you the tale of Brother Bear, the selfish and surly,” spoke the chief, as Little Beaver whittled splints for his basket making.

Brother Bear lived, at first, with his mate and two cubs in a den at the foot of a craggy rock which overlooked a pleasant valley. Here they slept together all winter. But early in the Moon of Leaves, even before his mate or the cubs had poked forth their brown snouts from the den, Brother Bear, the selfish one, became possessed of a keen desire to wander off alone. Selfishly deserting his family, off he shambled down the rocks. This was particularly mean and unjust, because through the cold wet moons which were sure to follow, it would be hard for the little mother bear to feed her cubs without Brother Bear's aid.

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Before starting off on his hike, Brother Bear the selfish one, looked afar off into the distant valley. His small keen eyes saw far, and he sniffed the wind gleefully, for he detected in the sharp air, a warmer, woodsy scent. It came from the swamps, and smelled like green herbage for which he keenly longed. Perhaps the purple skunk cabbages were even now pushing their sharp snouts up through the black, oozy marshes. At this pleasant thought, Brother Bear squatted down upon his haunches and allowed himself to slide swiftly down from the crag, backwards. As soon as he landed below he struck off on a shuffling run, swinging his big head from side to side as he traveled. The smell of the pines soon reached him, and the music of running waters, for the ice had left the brooks now and they ran free. The south wind which struck Brother Bear's molting coat felt good to him, and although he was shabby now, he knew that by autumn his fur would again be thick and glossy.

Picking his way nimbly, Brother Bear would halt occasionally to look for grubs or beetles. Searching some tiny crevice, or the bark of a cedar, the huge fellow would strike the tree smartly with his great flat paw, uttering little sing-song whines of delight when he knocked out a fine fat grub.

But Brother Bear longed for *green* things most of all, and at last reached the swamp. Here he

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floundered clumsily across the trembling tussocks of coarse grass, never making a mis-step, and soon he was digging young calamus roots, and crunching skunk cabbage sprouts contentedly.

Suddenly raising his head with a little growl, as a fresh scent came to him, Brother Bear knew at once that game was not far off. And, while he craved green things, which were his medicine, now he longed for meat. Because it had been a hard winter, and many deer had perished in the deep snow drifts, the scent which the bear caught came from a nearby ravine, where a deer had met its death crossing over the ranges.

But although Brother Bear did not know it then, another had caught the game scent even before he had, and already that other one was on its way to where the deer lay. Through the black cedar thickets it was stealthily taking the same trail as Brother Bear. But this big, tawny animal did not shamble; it took great, long, loping bounds, its feet gathered in a bunch as it leaped over the trails.

Its eyes were fiery and gleamed with savage eagerness, for it was hungry, this great beast. The sharp tufted ears, set stiffly erect on its flattened head, were alert; no sound escaped them. Woe to the one who should cross the track of this wild thing as it bounded lightly through balsam and spruce thickets, reaching the feast just ahead of Brother Bear.

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“Woof, woof,” grunted Brother Bear angrily, shaking his great head from side to side in sudden rage as, peering through the bushes he saw what lay before him. It was none other than Upweekis himself; a great, gaunt Canadian lynx, largest of his tribe, and mortal enemy to Moween the bear. Upweekis was the one creature the bear really dreaded to meet in battle, and here, right before him, was his enemy, already tearing and devouring his own coveted feast.

“Woof, woof,” growled Brother Bear again, with a deep, angry intake of his breath, which meant trouble for the lynx. Just then Upweekis spied the bear, and raising his ugly flat head, he began to scream forth his anger at being interrupted; crouching, spitting angrily at Brother Bear, ready to leap upon him if he came too close.

Now the mere sight of all that deer meat which had so nearly been his own, was too much for Brother Bear to stand. With head swinging, he made an angry, determined lunge straight at the crouching lynx. Next moment, had you chanced to look through the spruce bush you might have witnessed a combat which made the spot look as if a dreadful cyclone had hit it, while deep roars from Brother Bear, and howls and yells from the lynx, filled the forest with terror.

Clouds of brown leaves, whirlwinds of pine

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needles, and bits of brown and yellow fur arose in the air, and right in the midst of it all whirled and fought Brother Bear and Upweekis the lynx. The bear seemed to be getting the worst of the fight, for Upweekis might be seen clinging to his shoulder, biting, scratching, fighting savagely to the death.

How long the terrific battle would have lasted it is hard to say, for Brother Bear was brave, and a warrior when provoked. Just as the lynx appeared to be getting the best of him, having bitten him in the shoulder, Brother Bear gave a quick supple twist of his great hide; the lynx lost his grip, and quick as a flash the bear struck out with his huge flat paw, bringing it down upon the head of the lynx with a mighty blow which almost cracked the skull of old Upweekis, and stunned him so he was almost blinded. Then without waiting to see the lynx get up from where he had thrown him, Brother Bear seized what was left of the deer and struck off into the forest on a swift run.

Brother Bear was wounded far worse than he knew, however, for the bite of the lynx had poisoned his shoulder, and soon it began to make him feel weak and ill, while behind him as he traveled over the pine-bedded track, the warm blood left a bright trail. At last so weak did Brother Bear become from his wound, that without appetite for his prize, he crawled weakly beneath a shelving ledge, and

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lapping some snow water which trickled down from above, he licked his wounded shoulder, miserably, and by and by fell into an exhausted sleep.

Came stealing up from the south the warmer winds of summer, and once more Brother Bear ranged abroad, far away from the home trails. He found plenty of good fare, but somehow, in spite of it, he was still thin, for his wound had not healed well; it stung and throbbed at times, making him surly and cross, and always ready to pick a fight with any of the wild who should cross his tracks. He would not mate with another, and at last he became nothing but a cross old bachelor bear, roaming the woods alone.

At last, down in the valley beneath the bear's old home den, lay a wide, wonderful carpet of gay blossoms. New wild honey was being stored in hidden trees, and all the forest was green. Long ago mother bear had ceased to care for her two small cubs. Having once taught them to scramble down into the valley, and to hunt, she left them to themselves.

Thus it happened that one little round, furry bear cub chanced to be left quite alone, deserted, in the deep forest on an unknown trail. Perhaps the other cub still followed its mother. Who knows?

The little lone cub hunted for himself bravely. For hours he would patiently watch the door of little Tookhees the woodmouse, waiting for him to come

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forth. At last, impatiently clawing him out, he would smite his prey with his flat foot, and whining happily would devour it. He dug out grubs and beetles from beneath logs and once almost caught a chipmunk.

But when twilight came, and the great hoarse voice of Dahinda the bullfrog, came booming up from the marshes, and Koos-koos-koos the horned owl hooted, then the little lone cub, lurking fearfully beneath some low-hanging, tent-like spruce bush, was lonely. With his small, inquisitive eyes, he watched the little lights of Wah-wah-tay-see flicker in and out about him, and was less lonely because they were there. But in the night, being still lonely, and just a papoose, he would poke about with his little black snout, whining softly, as he nosed in vain to find his mother's great warm side.

Farther away he wandered from the home den, and one day the little lone bear entered a deep, dark ravine. Right into a gloomy hole in the rocks he fearlessly poked his small snout. But just as he did so, a deep savage growl made him erect his small round ears to listen. Still, quite brave and knowing no fear, the cub peered inside, and then far off in the gloomy cavern he saw a pair of red eyes peering at him angrily from a huge mass of black fur.

This was none other than cross old Brother Bear himself. But of course the little lone cub knew noth-

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ing whatever about cross old bears, and by this time he had long ago forgotten his own father. So the little lone cub, instead of being afraid of the old tyrant of the forest, whom all the wild kindred now shunned, was very glad indeed to meet him, and already began to feel less lonely. So straight into the den of the old bear went the little lone cub, thinking he had now found a friend.

Then did cross old Brother Bear, the selfish unhappy one, raise his great paw to strike the little lone cub, who was coming nearer and nearer all the time. Gradually, Brother Bear, watching the round furry cub come creeping closer and closer to him, uttering its trusting baby whines, began to drop his great paws, sheathe his sharp, cruel claws, and cease his rumbling growls.

Then the little lone cub reached Brother Bear, and trustingly crawling right in between the massive paws of Brother Bear, his own father, curled himself into a contented round ball of soft fur, and cuddling there between those cruel paws, he went to sleep. Then did the deep, rumbling, savage growls of cross old Brother Bear cease altogether, and he did a very strange thing. Gradually the huge head sank lower and lower, and finally he bent his snout, sniffing at the ball of fur between his huge paws. Then out came his big flat tongue, sweeping the face of the little lone cub with a swift caressing lap. And

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Brother Bear, knowing a sweet peace which had not been his for many long moons, went to sleep, the little lone cub between his paws.

All summer the two bears ranged the trails together and during that time the old bear taught the little lone cub much; how to trail a bee, where to look for ants' nests, and best of all, how to defend himself from an enemy. In time Brother Bear grew less cross and selfish, and always saved choice morsels for his little companion.

When came the Moon of Painted Leaves again, Brother Bear found his way back to the old deserted den overlooking the valley. Here all the winter they denned together. Never again did the little lone bear feel lonely. And Brother Bear, the cross and selfish, forsaken by all his tribe and the wood kindred because of his mean disposition, is no longer avoided now, for his own lost cub, who came back to him when he was sick and lonely, has completely changed his character, so that Brother Bear in his old age has become a welcome neighbor and friendly with all his race.

CHAPTER XII

THE STRANGE RIDE OF AN INDIAN BOY

LITTLE BEAVER was very curious to know the meaning of certain strange pictures which he saw rudely drawn upon the great war blanket of the old chief, and so, as they watched the red coals brighten, the chief began the story of the very strangest ride a boy ever had.

The story told upon the blanket took place when I was a boy, and was reckoned one of the bravest deeds of my life, well deserving to be painted upon the war blanket. In those days the buffalo roamed over our plains in great droves, and welcome was the news to me when I was one day told that I might go out with the men to hunt buffalo.

It was in the Moon of Falling Leaves, September. At this season a sort of wildness always came among the buffalo herds, and caused them to roam wide, in great companies across our plains. This was the very best time to hunt them. Our hunters well knew that often a fickle buffalo mother would forget her

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yearling calf, and leave it behind to follow the herd as best it might.

Never shall I forget my first glimpse of a foolish calf which had been left behind by the herd. When it saw me upon my pony, it completely lost its wits, and tried vainly to hide itself. First it dropped down right in front of me upon its knees, then pushed its nose out of sight in a bunch of sage brush, shutting its eyes tightly. The foolish calf actually thought he was out of my sight, when all the time the largest part of his body was in plain view, standing up on his hind legs where the hunters could plainly see him a mile away. This silly buffalo calf was the first large game I slew, and very proudly I afterwards wore his skin.

Now I was something of a coward in those days, for, in spite of many warnings, I often listened at twilight to the idle tales told by squaws. One of them was, that certain great, mysterious, green circles which I saw out upon the plains, were actually made by the feet of spirits, the Jeebi, or ghosts, who came there to dance their dances of triumph upon moonlight nights. Loudly did my father laugh at these tales, bidding me never heed them, but to find out for myself what these circles were, like a true brave.

So, while upon the hunt, being somewhat apart from the others, I began to come across many of

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these mysterious green circles, and far ahead I saw a small herd of buffalo. Skirting the herd, I drew up my pony in the edge of a thicket, and unseen by the buffalo I watched them curiously. Then, for the first time, I discovered that the green circles had not been made by either ghostly feet or moccasins, but by the mighty tread of buffalo.

Although it was September, the black stinging flies, the torment of the buffalo herd, were many, and this small company of great brown beasts, well-nigh mad with heat and the sting of insects, was trying to find a moist place upon the plains. Curiously I watched them, and saw the great bull leader lower himself upon one knee, then plunge his shaggy head and sharp horns into a miry place, digging out a round hole, which gradually filled up with muddy water.

Right into the mud hole plunged the leader, wallowing about and ridding himself of the stinging flies which clung to his head, nostrils and ears.

With a great bellow of joy he left the wallow. I noticed that the leader took the *first* chance, driving off the others until he had cooled off, each one waiting for a chance at the mud hole. Gradually the wallow became much larger, for each buffalo took away plenty of clay upon its heavy coat. Then I understood about the mysterious circles; of course when the wallow dried out it left a round hole; grad-

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ually the grass grew there, and it became a beautiful green spot. Having tarried so long to watch the buffalo wallow I now found myself far behind the hunt, and spurring on my pony, I caught sight of Little Bear, a young brave, far ahead of me.

“Hi, yi,” I called loudly, and Little Bear, slowing down, allowed me to catch up with him, for he too was riding a small pony like myself. Little Bear explained that we had become separated from the men, and that we had best make for a high bluff, halting there to wait for the hunters, who would probably round up and drive the herd towards the river.

Loping off together, we soon reached the bluff where we had a fine view of the country, and Little Bear eagerly pointed out to me a mighty cloud which appeared to mount to the very sky. It was dust, and soon the thunder of hundreds of hoofs reached our ears. The herd was coming! They had been headed off by the hunters, and were making now for the river, fleeing for their lives—the mighty buffalo herd.

The next instant Little Bear pointed out frantically that we could never hope to go around the herd, for they were headed straight for our bluff, spreading out in a great crescent shape. We were completely cut off from escape! Our only hope now

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was the river below, or an awful death; tramped beneath the hoofs of hundreds of buffalo.

A little ravine opened to one side, and towards this we hopefully spurred our ponies, hoping perhaps to enter it and escape. In vain. Even before we reached this haven, the buffalo leaders began to pour into the ravine. We were cut off completely—they were already closing in about us.

Like a great black wall came on the moving mass, bellowing with fear, tearing up the earth with flying hoofs and sharp, wicked horns. We managed to reach the river just ahead of them. I could feel and hear the pant of their mighty breathing close behind me, while my pony squealed with terror, halting as he reached the water's edge.

"Swim for your life!" called back my companion, Little Bear, already half way across the river, his pony swimming bravely through the swift channel. But my pony, already weary, turned stubborn, and bracing his feet upon the crumbling clay bank stood still.

Already the great bulls of the herd, the leaders, lowering their shaggy heads, with red, terror-stricken eyes, had plunged into the river. The next instant my fickle pony took fright, and bucking madly, threw me over his head into the water, while he swam for the other side, leaving me behind completely surrounded by great black buffalo. All about



"LAUGHING AT HIM FOR BEING SUCH A COWARD, CLUNG THE TIGHTER TO HIS COARSE MANE"—Page 99

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me my terror-stricken eyes saw huge black heads with fiery eyes, and sharp horns. I even felt their panting, heaving sides against me, and almost gave myself up for lost. But the Great Spirit was with me, so that I did not lose courage in spite of my awful danger. Like a flash I remembered that the mightiest buffalo leader is but a coward when in the water.

Then, very boldly, I managed to lay hold of a great black buffalo next me, and catching a firm hold of his shaggy mane, I pulled myself up onto his great neck. This frightened him. At first he shook his huge head, trying to rid himself of me, but I clung there, which seemed to frighten the old fellow still more, and then, like a coward, he began to swim madly for the opposite shore, while I, laughing at him for being such a coward, clung the tighter to his coarse mane. Once again before reaching the shore, in the very middle of the strong current he turned about savagely, facing me. But I promptly hit him a stinging blow upon his black nose with my stout bow. Snorting with fresh fear the old buffalo quickly swam to shore; he wanted most of all to get rid of his strange rider.

As soon as he reached shallow water, I knew he would turn upon me, and fearing this I did not wait for him to land, but slipped down from his neck into the water. So fast had my buffalo steed swum that

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fortunately for me, he had kept well ahead of the great herd, and to my relief, he did not turn back to find me, but leaving me to wade ashore as fast as I could, he scrambled up the bank and was soon out of sight. As he disappeared, I saw at a glance, that his great head was coal black, while his mighty body was almost bleached white by sun, clay, and old age. He was the oldest, the king leader of the herd.

Upon the other side, in a safe ravine, I found Little Bear waiting for me with my truant pony. There we stayed until the great herd swept by, and later we joined the hunters who were not very far behind. The story of my strange ride and escape from the mighty herd was told for years in the village, and I was made much of, my father giving me, as a reward, the skin of the largest buffalo slain in the hunt. Out of this the squaws tanned for me a wonderful blanket, and later, when I grew older, beginning to paint the story of my life upon my blanket, the very first deed of bravery recorded was my strange ride upon the back of the largest buffalo ever slain by our tribe.

CHAPTER XIII

WHY THE TAIL OF THE WEASEL HAS A BLACK TIP

"Who, ho-ho, ho-ho," called the great white owl, he of the cat face, waking strange echoes through the pine tops, making Little Beaver shiver and creep a trifle closer to the old chief, who mended his moccasins by the lodge fire.

"Ho, ho," chuckled the chief, "Kagax the weasel must surely be prowling to-night. Koos-koos-koos, the great owl, is warning her tribe. Listen, hear her cry."

"Does Koos-koos-koos the golden-eyed always know, then, when Kagax her enemy is abroad?" inquired Little Beaver.

"Yes, always, especially in winter, when snow lies white over all. But once she was not so wise. Now, since Kagax her enemy has been branded, in punishment for his meanness, she is better able to see him and sound forth her warning cry," replied the chief, and he began the story of the weasel's punishment.

Always has Kagax the weasel borne a bad name, even before the trappers came to the Northland.

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For Kagax was known as a mean robber who slew the weak; not always to stay his pressing hunger did he slay, but just because he was hateful and wanton. Always did Péboam, the winter god, give to Kagax a pure white coat as soon as snow came, which was such a fine disguise for the weasel that he might safely travel over the snow, and no one could be quite certain when he saw him. So even by day he could safely visit tree hole nests, so completely did his coat match the snow.

Now this was not quite fair to the wild kindred, because Kagax had them all in his power. For once, Péboam, god of winter had made a grave mistake, for unmolested, protected by their white coats, the tribes of Kagax the weasel multiplied, until they became mighty.

Early in the Moon of Bright Nights, even before the thick black ice left the ponds, Koos-koos-koos, the great snowy owl, had a family of downy baby owlets in her watch-tower nest. Fierce and brave, and very strong was the great snowy owl, but always very affectionate and gentle with the small owlets. Fiercely would she battle with great yellow talons and strong beak to protect them, and not many cared to brave her anger.

Very many mice and moles could the owlets devour in a single night, and Koos-koos-koos and her mate had to make long, weary flights over mountain

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and swamp. Patiently they would swoop down on their wide snowy wings over the frozen bog-lands; with searching eyes, bright as the very moon above, they flitted like great shadows up and down the dark pine forest trails all through the night.

This was just the time for old Kagax the weasel and his mischief-making prowlings. He would watch the goings and comings of the old owls, marking their nesting place. Then, often he climbed some tree, and robbed a nest, sneaking off, his white coat showing not at all, so exactly did it blend with the snow. Boldly would he cross the open now, and because he fared so well, his tribe increased in the North, until, to protect herself, Koos-koos-koos the owl made her nesting-place a little farther south one season, to escape the weasels. But an owl cannot live in a warm climate always, for the thick feathers of the great snowy owls were given them because they usually live in the cold North Country.

So back to the Northland came the great white owl and all her tribe once more, and because so many of the feathered and furred kindred had suffered keenly from the weasels, they held a council together. Knowing that Péboam always changed the brown coat of the weasels to white each season, they sent in a petition to the mighty god of winter, asking him to place some other mark upon sly Kagax, that

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their eyes might more easily see him as he came creeping over the snow to rob them.

'Tis said that Péboam most graciously listened to their plea, and then because he was troubled, knowing he had made a grave mistake in changing the coat of Kagax to pure white, and because of his anger against the weasels, he resolved to punish them. 'Tis said that even the tall pines on the mountains were almost bent double by the great roaring of his breath, that they sighed and sobbed together in their tops because of his anger.

And then Péboam made a solemn promise to Koos-koos-koos the snowy owl, that he would remedy his grave mistake. He would still give to the weasel his winter coat of pure white, but he would leave *the tip of the weasel's tail a dark brown*. Then all the wild kindred of the woods might readily spy his dark tipped tail against the white snow. Ever since that day Kagax the weasel has worn the tip of his tail dark in winter.

Often then, on moonlight nights, when you hear the lonely call of the great owl, hooting and crying, be sure she has spied Kagax, the cunning one, stealing forth on his travels, with white coat and black-tipped tail. But now the yellow eyes of Koos-koos-koos are no longer deceived; she always spies Kagax the robber.

“Waugh hoo, waugh hoo,” cries the owl. “Ka-

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gax the cunning one is abroad, look out for your little ones."

The same winter that Péboam changed and branded Kagax, he stayed later than usual up there in the Northland, trying to protect the furred and feathered ones. Because of this, the pine marten who is a cousin of the weasel tribes, was also marked with a badge. Always had the marten worn a dark brown coat. This matched the bark of a tree so precisely that he could climb straight up the trunk to the very edge of a nest without being seen.

One night, after a long weary flight, Koos-koos-koos the owl came home and spied a dark snake-like body creeping up to her nest. Flattening itself against the tree trunk, it halted, peering up at the owl in an impudent fashion with its hateful little red eyes, hissing at her like a snake, as the owl snapped her great beak at him in anger.

Now Koos-koos-koos had many strange habits. She could devour and relish a mouse well enough; that is, its flesh. But she could never swallow fur. So what did wise Koos-koos-koos do? She always stripped off the fur of the mouse, rolling it into a tight little ball in her mouth, and when she was ready she threw it out, just as one does the seed of a cherry. So all about the edges of her nest you might see these round balls, which she had cast forth. When the snow came it covered the edges of the nest, form-

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ing upon the pellets and making them into little snow balls.

Upon the night when Koos-koos-koos came back and found the hateful marten trying to rob her nest, the snow covered everything. The owl was so worried when she saw the brown body of the marten clinging to the tree trunk, that she called out loudly to Péboam, who chanced to be nearby, planning a great storm. Whining, moaning, came Péboam the mighty, ruffling up the thick white feathers of the owl, as he hastened to her to ask her will.

Then Koos-koos-koos pointed with a yellow talon to the brown flattened body clinging to the tree trunk, and begged that Péboam would place a white mark upon the cousin of Kagax the weasel, that she might see him from afar.

“But where shall I place this mark, this brand, upon the crafty one?” wailed Péboam the mighty, in perplexity.

Then Koos-koos-koos the wise one, leaning out of her nest, peered down and saw the marten still clinging to the tree, staring straight up at her, baring its sharp, cruel teeth, and hissing hatefully. And instantly the owl seized one of the hard bone and fur snow balls in her great talon, and aiming it straight at the throat of the brown robber, threw it with all her strength.

Some of the snow ball which the owl threw clung

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to the throat of the brown-coated robber, and even the warm breath of the south wind, which came after Péboam left, was never able to quite melt away the snowy mark upon its throat. Thus Péboam, aided by the wisdom of Koos-koos-koos, wisest of all birds of the forest, marked the pine marten with its white breast spot which it will wear forever.

His story finished, the old chief, as was his custom, struck the earth thrice, and Little Beaver knew that the legend was quite true.

CHAPTER XIV

SOME STRANGE WOOD SECRETS

“THE smoke from the lodge fires rises high through the pine tops; many stars will come out to cross the sky plains to-night,” spoke the chief. As it darkened, the gorgeous “evening star,” the pioneer, arose. Then appeared “the dipper,” its handle seeming to touch the tall points of the spruces far away upon the mountain-top.

“See; yonder comes the ‘Great Bear,’ ” pointed the chief. “He is now falling—falling. Already his body drags wearily across the plains of the sky.

“In the Spring the Great Bear leaves his den among the hills, then do the ancient Indian hunters spy him, and a long, hard chase commences. The bowl, or clustering stars, is the Great Bear; the trailing stars are the braves, the hunters, in pursuit. All through the summer they follow him across the plains of the heavens. Now it is autumn and their chase is nearly ended. See, his body droops; the Great Bear is spent and wounded. To-morrow you may see how his red blood has stained the forest leaves a bright crimson.

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"Soon will Péboam the winter come; then will the Great Bear die. But certain wise men of our tribes have seen his body in the early twilight of winter, far beneath our pole. When comes the Moon of Leaves, then will the Great Bear show himself again, climbing the sky, and the hunters begin once more the long chase, but never do they succeed in slaying him."

"And is this quite true?" questioned Little Beaver, anxiously.

Then the old chief struck the earth solemnly, thrice, which showed plainly that he himself believed the legend of the Great Bear, which all Indians know.

As the boy and the old chief watched the stars, up came the big yellow harvest moon, and then the old chief, pointing, spoke—

"See, right across the yellow moon, those little flitting, black shadows. Thousands of wings are flying past the moon; like ghosts they travel. 'Tis Wa-wa, the wild black goose. The moon is kind; it lights the flock through the skies; all night they journey. See, they keep close to the light, lest in the darkness of the clouds, some of the young and weak geese fall to earth. Listen, how the big chief of the flock bravely urges them on." And, by straining his ears, the boy could plainly hear one loud, rallying call—"honk, honk, honk,"—it was the big

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brave leader's call, sounding loudly above the rest.

A fox barked nearby—"yap, yap, yap,"—he was seated afar off on a hill, his eyes lifted to the moon—he saw the geese plainly.

"Ha, Eleemos the crafty one hears the geese. He is not happy; he barks because he is disappointed. The great flock are not for him, to-night. Wa-wa is wise; he flies high. For most of all do the wild geese dread and fear Eleemos the red fox. All his life he has schemed hard to fool them. Once, in the Moon of Falling Leaves, a certain tribe of Wa-wa the black goose, having journeyed far, reached a small sheltered retreat, where the waters were salt. The sedges and sea-weeds were filled with little shell fish, and the geese always came there to rest after a long night's flight, when the waters of the small, fresh water lakes were ice filmed. They fluttered down wearily at daybreak, to rest on the water and feed along shore.

"Safe and quiet appeared the reedy water-way. But sly Eleemos had a den not far away. At daylight his yellow eyes had sighted the long wedge-like flock of geese—Wa-wa and his tribe. They flew low on heavy wings, and were headed for the cove close by. Then did Eleemos the sly one hide himself in the rocks above the beach and watch the geese. Like a swift arrow that is spent, down dropped the geese from the sky. With harsh screams of command,

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Wa-wa, the big black leader headed his flock. Soon they were all settled, making a loud clamor as of many tribes quarreling. Eleemos noticed that some of the geese left the water. They waddled along shore on their short legs, hunting for sweet, spidery crabs. So Eleemos set his wits to work to find out how he could reach the geese in such an open spot without being seen by them. Soon he had thought out a plan. He gathered sea-weed from behind the rocks, and rolling it together in a bundle about as long as himself, pushed it over the rocks. Then the wind took it and rolled it right along the beach, among the geese.

“‘Quack, quack,’ screamed the alarmed geese, at first sight, frightened by the bundle rolling in their midst. But soon another bundle rolled down, then many others, until the geese became used to them, and went back to their feeding. Then did the sly fox, watching his chance, cover his own body with sea-weed, and roll swiftly down across the beach among the geese. Before they even knew he was among them, Eleemos the crafty had caught his breakfast—a fine fat goose, and was off and away.”

“Is there any other as wise as Eleemos the fox?” asked the boy.

“Yes, full of wisdom also is Malsun, the gray wolf who is a sort of cousin to the fox. Once upon a time—so runs a tale I heard when a boy—Wabasso the

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brown hare outwitted a whole pack of wolves who had hunted him for many moons. That is really the reason why Malsun the wolf bothers himself no longer to chase after the hare, for the tale of Wabasso's cleverness has long been known among the wolves. Listen to the tale of Wabasso, how he outwitted the wolf pack," began the old chief.

Once, a band of wolves who were very hungry, came across the trail of Wabasso the great brown hare. Large was Wabasso, while his long ears, when flat, reached the center of his brown back. His legs were swift and strong—more so than the wolves knew. Now at this time—in the age of myths—when animals were said to have speech with each other—then it was, the wolves took up their long chase. After a time they caught the giant hare, and were making ready to eat him, when some of them who had heard that the hare had a wonderful reputation as a dancer, even drumming his own accompaniment for the dance, were eager to be amused. So anxious were the wolves to see the hare caper, that crafty Wabasso told the wolves that he had just learned a new dance, and would teach it to them, if they would but spare his life a little longer. The curious wolves, eager to learn the new dance, promised not to harm Wabasso, if he would teach it to them.

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So the wolves quickly formed a ring around Wabasso the hare, that he might not escape from them. Then Wabasso, in the middle of the ring commenced to pat his furry feet, and circle dizzily around, all the time singing a funny song, which ran thus:

"On the edge of the field, among the clover, I dance around, dance around; Ha-nia, lil, lil, lil. Hania, lil, lil." And by this time the wolves were completely carried away; grinning and stamping their feet, keeping time to the music of Wabasso, and whining the song he sang.

"Now," said Wabasso, the giant hare, "when I sing—'on the edge of the field,' I always dance in that direction. When I sing, 'lil, lil, lil,' you must all stamp your feet very hard." So the wolves, stamped, all together, very hard. Again Wabasso began the song, each time getting closer to the edge of the field; until the fourth time the hare sang the song, the wolves thinking of nothing else, Wabasso, watching his chance, leaped right out of the ring over their heads. Full forty feet did the hare leap, and then was off like the wind. But soon the wolves were after him again. Then Wabasso, reaching a swamp, gave a prodigious leap and landed upon a great bog. All about this bog stood water, and this completely cut off his scent from the wolves.

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Leaping from the bog, Wabasso reached the center of the swamp, and here he soon found a hollow stump into which he crawled, being careful to pull inside his long ears, that they might not betray him; laying them flat upon his back. Then, fitting his trembling nose to a crevice, his bulging, frightened eyes seeing all, he watched and waited for his enemies, the wolves.

Soon he saw them come streaming towards the swamp. At the edge they halted, baffled, for they had lost the trail of Wabasso. Then, with joy, the hare saw that they were discouraged, and with trailing, sulky tails they all left the swamp—Wabasso had outwitted them.

Now, as Wabasso the hare was not cruel, never hunting the young or weak, he had many friends in the forest. An old blue heron who lived in the swamp, standing high on her long, stilt-like legs, had been watching the hare all the time, and had seen his brave escape from the wolves; how he had outwitted them cleverly.

Then, because the heron was glad, she began to dance the hopping dance of the herons. Leaping high for joy, she flapped her great blue wings loudly, as if to say—"Ho, ho, I am glad Wabasso the gentle hare escaped the red jaws of cruel Malsun the wolf, quoskh, quoskh, quoskh!"

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Then the loon chuckled as he dove, and the big cat-faced owl grunted from his watch-tower, "Who, hu-hu." And Wabasso, crouching in the stump gained fresh courage, being thankful that he had many friends in the forest.

CHAPTER XV

BRAVE ELEEMOS THE FOX MOTHER

“MARK well the bravery and courage of Eleemos, the fox mother, who lived in the Southland,” spoke the chief, and Little Beaver stopped his game of the little stones, listening eagerly to the promised story.

In the south, even between the mountain ranges, where lived Eleemos the red fox, it was fiercely hot until sunset. Where pines grew thick on the slopes it often *looked* cool, but the bedded pine needles held the heat well. Beneath a thicket of needle-pines lolled Eleemos the fox mother. The coloring of the pine needles upon which she lay matched her coat very well, so that she was well hidden from sight. This was exactly what she wished, for down below her, in the clay gullies, ran Mitches the quail, which even from her distant mountain lodge she could hear calling.

“Bobwhite, bob, bob white,” called Mitches the leader; then the little mother quail, leading the covey, following him, would whistle softly and clearly, “B-o-o-b *white*,” which meant, “coming.”

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Well enough Eleemos knew when the young quail were old enough to follow over the trails, and a feast of young quail would be fine for the half-starved mother fox. Then, in a certain place the wild black turkeys hid their nests; in a round hollow, bedded in the pine needles, the old turkey had hidden them, and when the mother turkey darted her long neck furtively this way and that, calling softly, "Truk, truk, truk," then sly Eleemos knew the little ones would follow in droves. "Peep, peep, peep," they would call, scurrying after their mother like leaves swept by the wind.

No wonder then, that Eleemos the fox lay there on the pine slope waiting and watching. She was shedding her shabby red coat and felt very uncomfortable. Her worst enemies, the little black fleas, tormented her, nipping her flesh viciously, and almost driving her mad. Vainly she changed her position; then she would whirl angrily about, snapping her white teeth at the fleas. Thinking perhaps the hot pine needle bed made her tormentors more lively and savage, suddenly the fox began to dig, throwing up showers of earth and needles, until finally she had hollowed out quite a deep hole in the cool red clay. Then turning herself about like a village dog, instead of keeping awake and watching, Eleemos went to sleep.

Off on the mountain, in a certain loamy gap, Elee-

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mos had her burrow. She dearly loved her three little fox cubs, and often, when far away on some trail hunting, she would halt, and straining her eyes, look back over her shoulder in the direction of her lodge. Then she would utter little wistful whines, all to herself; the mother cry of the fox, as she thought of the lonely cubs waiting for her on the mountain.

Lean and starved looking was Eleemos the fox mother, and she ran lame; for many days she had gone on three legs, for she had stuck a long thorn in one paw, and had tried in vain to pull it out with her teeth. The thorn was gone now, so, because the pain was less keen, she slept soundly. She had traveled a long way from her lodge to find food today, for the cubs were now craving stronger fare; no longer were they to be satisfied with the tiny mice which she had been feeding them. For somehow, lately, there seemed to be very little game to be had near home. The reason for this was that others, whose presence the fox did not even suspect, had been hunting the trails bare.

In a well hidden lair Upweekis and his mate, two of the largest panthers on Great Craggy mountain, had come to live not far from Eleemos the fox. Even now, while she slept on the distant pine slope, the little foxes were in great peril. But the fox mother was so worn out, and the heat was so dreadful, that

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all through the day she slept in the cool earth hole on the pine slope. Even the flapping of wings and the strident calls of the warring blue jays, flying in and out gnat hunting among the pines, or the "tap, tap, tapping" of the little nuthatches gossiping up and down the tree trunks close to her furry ears, did not awaken the fox.

Already the shadows had begun to lengthen down in the valley, and fall across the pine slope where Eleemos still slept, before she opened her drowsy amber eyes. One wide yawn she gave, then up she sprang, all alert. Close at hand sounded—"Bob-white, bob, bob, white."

Then, her pointed snout close to earth, the fox watched, and saw right between the scrub pines ten little sleek bobbing heads, set off by cunning white bands; the covey of Mitches, led by their crested chief. They always came there to hunt beneath the pines at twilight, for it is then the little white, velvety moths, which cling all day close to the tree trunks, fly out in fluttering droves, fine fare for Mitches the quail, and the squeaking night hawks, swooping low among them.

Suddenly Eleemos, hidden there in the shadows, gave a high leap; another, which landed her straight on a brown, feathery back; and for the first time in two suns the fox mother broke her fast. When she started for her distant lodge, it was almost dark,

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and she heard the wail of Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will calling her as she crossed the valley. But she did not heed the squeaking bats, or try to snap at them as they slapped her ears, fluttering low; no longer did she mind her sore foot; she was happy, for in her mouth she carried food for the cubs.

It was moonrise. Swift were the feet of Eleemos, as, like a shadow, she slipped through the last rocky ledge. The den was well concealed by heavy rhododendron bushes, flaming now with scarlet blossoms, which showed plainly in the moonlight. Matted, snaky roots trailed over the doorway of her lodge, and usually a round furry face would be poking forth between the black roots, watching for her. Sometimes, even before Eleemos had rounded the last ridge, the cubs would catch her scent and commence to bark sharply and impatiently, urging her to hurry with their supper; squabbling, pushing, rolling over each other, each one trying to get to her first.

But this time when the fox mother returned, she strained her ears in vain to catch the small yelp of welcome, and no saucy, inquisitive face peeked forth at her from between the rhododendron roots.

Everything seemed strangely silent. Then, even before she entered her lodge, the fox mother knew something terrible had happened to the cubs. Losing all interest in the game which she had brought

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home, she let it fall unheeded from her jaws. Lightly leaping through the root screen, she crawled inside the burrow, and nosing about she finally found just one small bundle of trembling, whining fur—all that the mean old panther had left her, the weakest little fox cub of all; the others were gone.

Then the fox mother whined sorrowfully to herself, gently lapping the furry coat of the little cub, and finally she went outside and brought it the game. Then, leaving the cub to eat its supper, the fox took the trail by which the panthers had gone. She determined to find them, and, if not too late, to rescue her two cubs. In and out between the rocky shadows, swiftly traveled Eleemos the fox, her red brush trailing sadly behind. Not many of the wild things heard her pass by, so silent was the pad of her soft footfall.

Now Upweekis the panther and his mate had in their lair just one fierce panther kitten. For this one they hunted and stole every living thing which they could conquer on the mountain. Having devoured the two cubs of Eleemos the fox, they were going off together for an all night hunt, leaving the kitten panther behind.

Upweekis, the male, went off first and then the mother panther, with soft velvet tread, came out upon the cliff before her lodge. The moon shone down upon her tawny back as she halted there, her

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blazing yellow eyes lighting up her great cat-like face, showing the awful length of her claws as she began to sharpen them upon a log.

Now, although the panther was fully as crafty as Eleemos the fox, she was not quite a match in slyness and wit. So she failed to notice the look of hate which the fox mother bent upon her, as, hidden behind a tree trunk, she watched the panther sharpening her claws.

Having finished with her claws, the mother panther raised her flat head, and baring her cruel fangs, she sent one long-drawn panther yell out across the valley. This awful yell made the red fur rise on the back of the little fox mother, for it is the most fearsome yell of all the wild things of the forest. Instantly the fox realized she would never be a match for the panther; that she could never hope to conquer it in battle. It would be safer to keep hidden. Again the panther yelled, and before the echo died away, from across the valley came the call of her mate, and leaping gracefully off into the shadows the panther mother disappeared.

Losing no more time, Eleemos the red fox soon found the lair of Upweekis and his mate, and the little panther left alone. Seizing the spitting, scratching kitten by the nape of its neck, the mother fox carried it outside the lair. Then she went back to look for her cubs, but of course they were not



"BUT IT WAS GONE FOREVER; AT DAWN THE BLACK BUZZARD WHO ROOSTED
IN A TALL PINE, WOULD FEAST UPON ALL THAT REMAINED
OF THE LITTLE ONE"—Page 123

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there. So, wild with rage, again the fox mother seized the panther kitten, determined to revenge herself upon Upweekis the panther, by killing its little one. She took the scratching thing firmly in her jaws, giving it a rough shake, trying to decide just what she would do to avenge her own wrongs.

Then, suddenly, the little panther gave a quick twist and managed to free itself. Landing in a round ball on the shelf-like cliff, it began to roll helplessly, and even before the fox mother could leap to catch it, the kitten panther—the last one of the family of Upweekis—bounded right out over the steep crag and out of sight.

Close to the edge of the cliff crawled the fox, and peering off into the shadows she tried to see the little panther. But it was gone forever; at dawn the black buzzard who roosted in a tall pine, would feast upon all that remained of the little one.

Back through the night, to her loamy burrow on the hill ran the fox mother. Going inside her lodge, she quickly had the little fox cub in her jaws, and set forth upon a long journey. Without pausing to rest, so great was her haste, she made for the far-distant pine slope where she had slept that day. Her burden was heavy and the way was long, but Eleemos did not think of this; all she hoped for now, was to get as far away as possible from the panthers' lair before the dawn.

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Having reached the pine slope at last, there on the bedded needles she laid the cub, and digging out the hollow still more to make room for the little fox, they slept together. The owls went back to their homes at daybreak, then came Mitches the quail, and all the little ones calling sweetly back and forth, "Bobwhite, bob, bob, white," but still the faithful fox mother and her little red-coated cub slept. For Eleemos the fox had done a good night's work. She had saved her one cub, and revenged herself well upon Upweekis the panther. When they returned to their lair their one spitting, scratching kitten was not there; the lair was empty.

CHAPTER XVI

UPWEEKIS HUNTS CATNIP

“THE ways of the wild brothers are wise, and well enough they know what for them is good medicine, when they are sick and weary,” spoke the chief. And then he told Little Beaver this story of Upweekis the lynx.

Early one summer, the trails of the forest, which had been thick covered with many leaves, were worn smooth by the passing of many swift feet, of the wild tribes who were coming forth, leaving their winter places. They were everywhere; they haunted the still pools where the young fish are hatched and where, at sunrise and sunset, they leap high from the water to catch the army of gnats which dance and hover above.

But there was one little wild family which had not left its winter den among the rocky ledges of the mountainside. This was Upweekis, the great tawny mother lynx, and her two half-grown kittens. The sun beat down hotly against the entrance of her

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lodge as she lay stretched out languidly before it, watching the kittens as they played and rolled over each other, spitting, and biting each other in play.

Upweekis, the mother lynx, began to wash her furry face and tall ears, tufted like a warrior's top-knot. Her eyes, as she glanced at the kittens, were golden and kind, for she loved them very tenderly. Having washed her face, Upweekis began to frolic with the kittens, prudently sheathing her sharp cruel claws lest she harm them, although sometimes she cuffed them rather roughly, knocking them about so they rolled like fur balls beneath her great paws. Wearying of this, fondly she pulled them down between her mottled forepaws and began to lap them hard, purring over them, washing their round ears roughly but lovingly.

But Upweekis soon wearied of the cubs. She was restless and not quite herself. In fact, she had been sick and unhappy for many moons; that was the very reason she had not left the ledges before. She came out upon a flat rock and took up a restless gliding walk, back and forth, back and forth, her yellow eyes peering forth over the valley. The old lynx was a full-grown Canadian; she was sly, treacherous, and like all of that tribe, would battle well for her rights.

The sides of Upweekis the lynx now showed thin and hollow, for it had been hard for her to raise her

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two lusty kittens, when she herself felt weak and sick. The Great Spirit came to the aid of Upweekis, however, telling her just what she needed. Nature always supplied certain herbs for the lynx tribes when they needed medicine. So just then Upweekis remembered that afar off, two suns away, there always grew a bed of rank wild catnip, the very medicine she craved.

The more she thought of the strong wild medicine, the more did she long for it, for well enough old Upweekis knew that if she went forth again on the long hunting trails, she must be strong, and so she must hasten to find the catnip. Then once again would her lost strength return, and her coat become thick and glossy.

Upweekis was naturally very wary in her movements. She loved best to steal forth about twilight, skulking in and out among the shadows which hid her movements from other watchers whom she cared not to meet. But now Upweekis suddenly seemed in desperate haste. More and more she thought of the longed-for catnip, and keener became her desire to get to it. Already she seemed to smell the delightfully bitter odor of its spicy, gray-green leaves. She longed to roll her great body about in them.

But the mother lynx was troubled. For alas, the kittens, clumsy, fat, and all unused to a long rough trail, how could they be made to follow her such a

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long distance? And how, weak as she now was, could she protect the little tender things from fierce prowlers—Lohks the panther, or perhaps hungry Malsun, the great gray wolf, who would not hesitate to carry off her kittens if they were hunting food.

But Upweekis was not afraid for herself, and impatient now to be off, she determined not to spare the kittens. So without ceremony, she hastily began to scramble down the ledges, mewing back encouragingly for her young to follow her. When they held back she coaxed them; then, impatiently, she would seize one of them by the nape of its neck and lift it down some steep place, going back for the other one. It was easier traveling farther down, beneath the ledges, and Upweekis was thankful when at last she entered the dim, cool woods.

Upweekis finally reached a clearing covered with a jungle of wild raspberry vines. Here and there among the briers lay a great giant of a tree trunk which loggers had felled, for the pale faces had built camps throughout the forests of the north. The mother lynx and her kittens must cross this clearing before they could enter the still, safe balsam woods lying beyond.

Already the kittens were panting and mewing fretfully as they waddled painfully along the rough trail, trying to follow Upweekis, their mother. Often they would lie right down in their tracks to rest,

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but this the old lynx would not let them do, there in the open clearing. For far away, just a mere speck in the sky, each instant was wheeling nearer and nearer the wide, swift wings of Chep-la-hgan, the great eagle, whose searching, golden eyes had already sighted the lynx family. Upweekis was sure that the eagle had seen her kittens, and she turned back on them fiercely, urging them to hasten, mew-ing to them, coaxing them, like a great cat. In her anxiety to escape from the eagle, Upweekis did not then know of another danger close at hand.

Concealed by the thick tangles of the raspberry vines, picking the dripping, scented red berries eagerly, an Indian boy worked. So taken up with the berries was he, that he had not seen the furtive movements of the lynx family until he heard the coaxing mews of Upweekis calling her kittens.

The boy peered through the briers and turning about, he soon spied the lynx; already she was crouching to spring upon him, and he had not an instant to loose. But the boy was brave, although well enough he realized he would never be able to battle with Upweekis the lynx, alone; not when she had kittens with her. For every Indian boy early learns not to meddle with any wild mother when followed by her young.

Swiftly the boy leaped over the berry thickets, not even halting to save his hard-won berries.

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Straight over high bushes and great logs he flew, but soon he knew that Upweekis was following his trail, for she was now very savage; enemies had crossed her path. She would drive them far off, away from her kittens and the longed-for catnip bed.

Spitting, snarling, her green eyes filled with hate, she followed the boy, who expected every instant to feel the clutch of her awful claws upon his shoulders. He saw the woods before him. Could he gain them? If he could, then perhaps he might climb some friendly tree. Next instant he knew how foolish was his thought, for never could he escape the lynx by climbing a tree; Upweekis could climb even better than an Indian boy.

Just then the boy's quick eye spied a huge log lying in his path. It gave him an idea, and there was not an instant to lose; Upweekis was almost upon him.

The boy reached the log just ahead of the lynx. Then, bravely he lay down, managing to squeeze his trembling body flat beneath the great log, which was slightly raised from the ground. There he lay, while the lynx hurled her great tawny length at the log, tearing forth great splinters of wood and howling angrily, as, completely baffled, she tried vainly to reach the boy and drag him forth from the friendly log.

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Her claws were so long and sharp that she had soon torn his clothing to ribbons, but his body she could not reach. The boy soon knew that he could not stay beneath the log much longer, for another enemy had found him; a great army of angry black ants, disturbed from their log home, had now begun to crawl up and down the boy's body in fleet swarms, nipping his flesh until he felt as if fire-brands were scorching him.

He knew now that he must, in spite of the awful claws of the lynx, crawl from beneath the log, or he would soon be stung to death by the ants. But just then, when he had about made up his mind to crawl out and face the lynx, his dog, which had been chasing a hare, returned, and as the boy peeped forth, he saw Upweekis the lynx turn about, and fly upon the astonished dog.

Over and over they rolled in deadly battle. The dog, though a puppy and untrained, was brave. They fought well, while the forest echoed with their yelps and snarls, from which all the wild kindred fled in sudden terror.

Then, right in the midst of the mighty battle, the tufted ears of the mother lynx caught the appealing sound of a mewling cry, and she saw the two kittens come waddling slowly forth from the briar tangles. Instantly the old lynx decided to fight no longer; the kittens needed her. So pausing just long enough

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to give the astonished dog a blinding blow across his eyes with her great paw, which tore a strip of fur from one long ear, she left him, and went back to her young. Then the boy and his dog, losing no time, hastened off into the deep woods.

As for Upweekis the mother lynx, not for a moment had she forgotten the object of her long journey, or the much longed-for catnip. So coaxing the weary kittens to follow her trail, without even halting to lap her own painful wounds, Upweekis went on.

Not until Wah-wah-tay-see the firefly began to flicker in and out among the thickets, and the quavering call of little Kupkawis, the barred owl, began to sound from the woods, did the mother lynx halt.

Later, when it was moonrise, you might have seen a pleasant sight. If you had peered through the thick spruce barrier, over into a certain hollow nook in the woods you would have seen, stretched to rest upon the gray-green, dewy catnip, the slim tawny body of Upweekis with her two kitten cubs. They were very weary, but their slumbers were sweet, for Upweekis had at last found her good medicine—the longed-for catnip; she was now well and happy.

CHAPTER XVII

HOW OJEEG THE FISHER WAS PUNISHED

“CUNNING is Ojeeg the fisher, and also a robber,” spoke the old chief. “But once he met his match among the wood people, and so well punished was he, that he has never forgotten his lesson. And this is how it all happened.”

Every wild creature of the woods had reason to fear Ojeeg, and even the larger, bolder kindred did not care to cross his trail too often. Nothing pleased him more than nest robbing. Poking his snout into hidden burrows among the rocks and wooded hollows, in among the briar patches, he would search. Nimbly would he climb any tree where there were downy fledgelings or eggs, and he could craftily spring a snare, taking away the bait without fear of being caught.

Even clumsy Unk-wunk, grunting over the trails, dreaded Ojeeg, because he feared not his armor of dreadful quills. He understood only too well where to look for some unprotected, weak spot, and so the porcupine was often his prey.

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Wabasso the brown hare, who lived in a brier thicket, once frightened Ojeeg well. The fisher was chasing the hare, and had almost caught her. But Wabasso burrowed deeply into the snow to hide herself, leaving just a peep hole, out of which she poked her trembly nose as she watched.

Creeping along over the snow crusts, his little mean eyes searching everywhere, Ojeeg soon spied the suspicious snow mound beneath which the hare hid, and slyly planned to catch her unawares. But just as he reached the snow mound which hid Wabasso the hare, out flew her long legs, catching hateful Ojeeg right in his stomach, sending him whirling and sprawling over the snow crusts. Before he could clear his eyes, the hare was many leagues away.

Always, the young fledgelings of Kahgahgee the crow were a fine meal for Ojeeg, the cunning one. True, the crows were also great robbers, and brave enough, often harrying a hawk or owl for many miles, driving them far. But the crows feared Ojeeg, for, with all their watching, he managed to climb a tree where they nested, and flattening himself upon a limb, he would watch until the old crows left the nest, then boldly steal their young.

Quaint-faced Moo-wee-suk, the little gray raccoon, lived in his hollow pine tree nest in the depths of the forest, and was so afraid of Ojeeg the fisher

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that he always set up a pitiful, whimpering cry of fear, whenever he heard the rattle of claws against a tree trunk, thinking it might be the fisher; while a fleeting glimpse of Ojeeg's brown coat would send him tearing off to his nest as fast as he could travel.

No wonder then, that the fisher was hated, and had a very bad name among his wild neighbors. Even Moween, a good-sized bear, dodged when she had a notion that Ojeeg was following her great flat tracks, because once, when she had made a fine, secret cache in the woods, the fisher, following her unseen, watched to see her bury her treasure, and, when her back was turned he had sneaked forth and dug it up.

Now this was against the code of the wild, for among themselves they are honorable enough to pass by another's cache without disturbing it. And each animal is careful to place his private mark upon his buried game, which means to others—"this is my property, keep away."

Perhaps the pleasantest time of all for Ojeeg was at twilight. Then, when he knew the herons and water fowl were on the shore to fish for their supper, he would sneak along, hiding his movements behind the tall rushes and cattails. In among these he always found the unguarded nests of Quoskh, the little blue heron, and others, and all during their nesting time the stiff whiskers of Ojeeg, the sly

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robber, were smeared with traces of his wonderful egg feasts.

Once Huckweem, the white loon, came back to her nest and caught him in the very act of breaking her two beautiful white eggs, which she fondly believed she had hidden so well that no living creature could find them. Just as the black snout of the fisher touched the first egg, there came a rushing avalanche of feathers over him, and Huckweem's strong wings beat him so terribly, and her great webbed feet mauled him so fiercely, that he finally crawled off by himself, managing to escape, though badly hurt.

Ojeeg would never have escaped from the angry loon, but it happened that his furry coat fitted him loosely, so that by twisting about he managed to wriggle himself from the loon's talons, although Huckweem tore out a good-sized tuft of his fur and gave him a dreadful thrashing. She felt so joyous about this that she gave a loud uncanny scream of triumph as she watched the tall reeds sway and close behind his mean body.

This should have taught Ojeeg a lesson, but it only frightened him for a short time. Soon he became more bold than ever, going about over the trails quite openly, until his wood neighbors hardly dared leave their nests or little ones to seek food, fearing that Ojeeg, the hateful robber, would come and devour their young before they could get back.

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But fortunately, there was a time coming when Ojeeg was to receive a terrible and humiliating punishment for his mean ways.

Finally, an old gray badger, who was also very wise, set his wits to work, trying to think how he could punish and humiliate sly Ojeeg the fisher. A woodchuck family had made their lodge on a side hill. Very fine and convenient was their burrow, for it had two entrances; one came right out in plain sight of everybody, but the secret door of their lodge opened into the deep, dark woods. So, as the woodchuck family had left their lodge to live near a fine clover field, the old badger crawled inside their burrow to rest, and while there he made a plan to punish the fisher.

Stealing out about sunset, when he knew the fish would be leaping, the old badger soon caught a fine big fish, but instead of eating it, he placed it carefully outside the door of the woodchuck's lodge. This was the front door, right in plain sight. Then the badger, leaving by that door, stole back to the burrow by way of the secret back door.

Before long, sly Ojeeg the fisher came sneaking from his lair in a hidden cedar thicket. He sniffed and sniffed, smelling fish, and soon his greedy eyes had sighted the fine fish in the entrance of the burrow. Now he had seen the badger go out at the front door, so of course Ojeeg thought the lodge

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was empty. But all the time the old gray one was far back inside, watching, laying a trap for the fisher.

Just as Ojeeg, the greedy, poked his hateful snout inside, making a quick grab for the fish, from the shadows of the lodge suddenly came the painted, war-like face of the badger, and with a click like the snapping of a trap, the badger's sharp teeth fastened themselves in the foot of sly Ojeeg, holding it in a strong grasp. Growling, hissing, tearing up the earth with his strong hind legs, the fisher tried vainly to tear himself loose, and back out. But the harder he pulled back, the tighter did the badger hold to his paw. At last Ojeeg was trapped.

Inside, the old gray badger braced himself firmly against the walls of the burrow, and so prepared to hold his position there for a long time. And as Ojeeg's angry eyes watched his painted face in the gloom of the burrow, it actually seemed to the trapped fisher that he grinned over the good joke he was playing upon him.

But Ojeeg's troubles were not over. All through the night the badger held him prisoner at the mouth of the lodge. As soon as dawn came, all the birds awoke; then came Kahgahgee the crow. With wild hoarse cries of triumph and glee the crows flew upon him, pecking and scoffing at him, for plainly he showed all his body outside the burrow. Ojeeg

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let fly his strong hind feet at his tormentors, but it was no use; he never hit them, for his head was inside the burrow and his aim went wild.

All day long the badger held him there, and one after another the wild things came to jeer at him; all those whom he had robbed and tormented now came, and all punished him in some way, for news travels fast in the forest. Not until twilight began to throw long shadows across the waters of the pond, did Painted-face, the warrior badger, decide to let Ojeeg the fisher go free.

When at last he loosened his terrible grip, Ojeeg, hobbling, whining to himself, unable to use his sore paw, crawled off quite humbly into the dark woods to hide himself. Searching, he found at last a secret hole far away from the well-worn trails of the wild.

And then the things of the forest—the pine tree tops and all the whispering little leaves gossiped together, telling how glad they were that the fisher had at last been humbled and punished. And after that none of his tribe ever crossed the trails of Painted-face, the badger.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHY KAHGAHGEE THE CROW WEARS BLACK

So silent was the moccasined footfall of Little Beaver and the chief upon the pine needle carpet of the woods, that even Eleemos the fox, sly and crafty as he was, failed to hear their approach.

Gone now was the cold Moon of Snow Shoes, and the fox was lean from his long winter of privation and scant fare. Now the soft voice of Shaw-on-da-see, the south wind, sang through the feathery pine tops, and the birds and furry things had long come forth from their snowy coverts.

Eleemos the fox was frantically seeking game to still the gnawing of his empty stomach. At first, before getting his bearings, he trotted jauntily and aimlessly over the trails. Suddenly a wonderful scent reached him; Mitches the partridge was abroad, leading her covey to a thicket where dried berries still hung on.

Then Little Beaver and the chief, crouching low in the thicket, watched the sly red-coated Eleemos as he stalked his prey.

Low on his stomach crept the fox, but in spite of

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his wariness the tip of his red tail showed above the dried brackens, and Mitches, the little chief partridge, saw him. But he was very brave, and with his barred tail feathers spread like a war bonnet and his crest raised high, he charged upon the fox. Whirring loudly, right into the face of Eleemos he rushed, beating, almost blinding the crafty fox. This the brave little partridge did in order to attract the attention of the fox while his family, the little partridges, made their escape.

“Whirr-whirr-r,r,r,” came a swift rush of many small, brown-barred wings; like the rushing together of brown leaves in the autumn they sounded, and lo, they had vanished as completely as if the ground had swallowed them up. All but one, and the next second Eleemos the fox, escaping the buffeting wings of Mitches, had this little partridge in his lean jaws. The fox, instead of eating his supper right there, concluded to carry it to some safe covert where none would spy upon him. He imagined himself quite safe now from prying, covetous eyes; but some one had been watching him eagerly all the while.

“Cawr, cawr, cawr,” sounded the rallying cry of many strident voices. The noise came from among the tips of a clump of giant balsams in the edge of the forest. Loud flapping wings rushed forth, while from beyond, in the thick pines, crow after crow

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came trailing forth, following the call of their leader. Swiftly the crows flew, the sun glinting across their wings, making them shine like polished steel. And all the crow flock headed straight for Eleemos the fox.

"Ha," chuckled the chief, "watch closely and you will see some fun. Old Kahgahgee, the crow chief, always on the watch to steal, has made up his mind to rob the fox of his supper."

"Rahk, rahk, rahk," screamed the crows hoarsely, altering their cry, rallying the trailers who winged behind. Swiftly they sent back barking orders, bidding them hurry to the feast.

With a loud, triumphant "cawr, cawr, r,r,r," Kahgahgee swooped low, his followers wildly sweeping after him. Then, suddenly the air seemed to be filled with a whirling mass of red furry feet and flame colored brush, flying black feathers and beating wings. The leader clutched the fox firmly with his strong yellow talons, and with his great black beak he fought to get possession of the partridge. While the crow leader beat the fox, the other crows kept flying down upon him with hoarse, terrifying caws, harrying and beating his back, until finally with a series of angry, baffled barks, the fox loosened his hold upon the game; he had lost.

A swift uprush of wide wings and Kahgahgee, the triumphant, with the coveted partridge in his

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clutches, soared off, making straight for the woods. The jealous crow tribe followed after him, and Eleemos, the whipped, mourning over his lost supper, slunk out of sight among the darkening thickets, trailing his brush behind him as he went.

“Ah, Kahgahgee, the cowardly one, has once more beaten his enemy, the fox,” spoke the chief, as he and Little Beaver once more took the trail together. “Boaster and coward is the crow. Instead of being humble, he boasts of his black feathers, when he should feel only shame, for they are a badge of his disgrace. He flaunts them boldly now, calling attention to himself with loud cries.

“Once Kahgahgee the crow was really as beautiful as the wonderful bird of Paradise, so it is said. His feathers were then as the inside of a pearl shell for purity and whiteness. But because of their boastings; because they were such gossips, that no one could have a secret but the crows would find it out, and proclaim it upon the tall trees, their plumage was changed to jet black. This is the color of darkness; it places them in the ranks of the Jeebi, the bats, and evil spirits who blight our corn and who love darkness best.

“An ancient chief has told that once Kahgahgee the crow even disclosed to the enemy the secret hiding place of a certain great god whom many worship, named Mohammed. This God had concealed

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himself in a safe place among the rocks. But in spite of the crow's betrayal of this secret hiding place of the God, Nature sent her protection. Ome-me, the gentle wood dove, came and built her nest there, covering the rock, while a great painted spider spun such a dense webbed curtain over the retreat, that the crows were outwitted.

“No bird who wore feathers had such a chance and such gifts as had Kahgahgee the crow in ancient days. He was even possessed of the power of speech, and could speak well the language of the Crow Indians, our cousins. Even now, if held long a captive, he sometimes can speak a few hoarse words as men do.

“Once upon a time my father found a perfectly white crow. This was so rare that the wise men of our tribe held him sacred, for they knew he had in some way, perhaps for his virtues, escaped the black brand of his tribe; therefore he must be a great crow chief. So now whenever an Indian finds a white crow, we take it to our lodges and treat it with respect, and it is even allowed to take part in great councils of war. Because of this have we Indians adopted the great war cry of Kahgahgee the crow, ‘Rhak, rhak, rhak!’ ’Tis the fiercest rallying cry heard in battle.

“Kahgahgee has many cries and speaks in many different tongues. Half a hundred cries they have.

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Loudly do they quarrel among themselves, screaming like angry squaws; using many idle words. They can bark like the village dogs, often fooling even the dogs themselves. Sometimes their wail is like the Jeebi, the ghosts, and they even mock the short coughing cry of Koos-koos-koos the great owl, who calls at night from the solitary pine in the swamp.

“Early in the morning, in the spring time, even before the white fog blankets have left the marshes, then does the crow band begin to rise up and gossip together. ‘Caw,r,r,caw,r,r, cá-cá-cá,’ they bark; ‘we must hurry and choose mates, we must throw together our untidy nests quickly to raise our scrawny brood before the young corn shoots out its tender spear points above the brown earth. Then we shall have more time to pull it up, and to rob others of their eggs and young. Cá-cá-cá,’ they scream.

“Then they build their lodges, and sit teetering on the tips of the tallest pines, gossiping together. There are a few, who, in spite of their boasting and strength, do not fear the crows. One is the brave little King bird and all his tribe. Always does the King bird chase and harry the crows. Long lasts the chase, for the little bird never gives the crow a chance to alight and defend himself. He even mounts on a crow’s back, firmly fastening his claws into his thick back feathers, and there sits tormenting him, pecking at his eyes, while the angry crow

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dashes wildly through the air, trying to get rid of his small tormentor.

“But everything has *some* good,” spoke the chief. “For Kahgahgee, even if he does pull up the green maize, devours such quantities of insects, grubs and other enemies to the corn field that he is helpful. Were it not for his evil reputation we might like him better. But heed that you become not a boaster, my son. Now no one trusts Kahgahgee the crow, and he wears the coat of darkness—he has been branded as evil.”

CHAPTER XIX

HOW THE LITTLE BLACK BEAR SAVED HER CUBS

“SOMETIMES,” spoke the chief, “the wild things become great robbers. But, lest we always blame them for this, listen to the story of Moween, the little black bear.”

It was during the time of Falling Leaves, and Moween saw, beyond her mountain home, over the black pines, the maples showing their red and yellow painted robes. The forest was filled with wild things. Moween’s watchful eyes spied the sleek brown feathers of Mitches the partridge, feasting upon berries. She knew the hiding places of the black duck who fed in the marshes. Well she knew what all the feasting meant; they were making ready for their long, weary flight to the Southland.

Moween herself feasted among the beech thickets, where the nuts fell in showers from their crinkly husks. She would scrape them up with her great flat paws, crunching them eagerly. Her furry paws pulled down wild cherry branches dripping with puckery, sour-sweet cherries, like blood drops. And

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down in the swamps the wild grape vines trailed snakily, heavy with purple clusters which the frost had nipped. Moween's flat feet wore deep trails to her favorite feeding places in the marshes.

Then, because it was a time of feasting and frolic, Moween became more bold, and often now she stole far down to the edge of a settlement where she discovered late corn. She had no appetite for fresh game at that season, when nuts and berries were to be had for the picking.

Now although many of the faint-hearted feared Moween, she was never fierce or war-like excepting when she was harried or hunted, or when there were cubs. Then, if the cubs were molested, would she fight for them, giving her very life, if necessary. But many there were who went *around* the trails of Moween, while innocently enough the little black bear went about hunting mushrooms in the meadows, never mistaking the bad sort for the good; she was too wise to do that. Often, just for mischief, she would dig out the cache of Meeko the red squirrel, watching him from afar as he scurried about, chirring loudly to himself, thinking he had made a mistake in his hiding-place.

Moween spent hours ambling through the woods looking for rotting tree trunks. She would turn over log after log with much patience, as she hunted and

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dug for fat white grubs, uttering little low whines of delight when she uncovered some treasure.

The Moon of Falling Leaves was passing. Moween's eyes anxiously watched the cold white fogs of autumn rise from the valleys in the early dawn. And finally, instead of the ghost-like fog, came black, blighting frost, nipping all green things to blackness, and filming the brook with clear, glass-like ice.

Moween raised her eyes skyward, as she heard the lonely call of Wa-wa the wild black goose, rallying, hoarsely summoning his tribe to follow him. Marching like warriors, right across the sky plains they flew. "Honk, honk, honk," they called down to Moween—"Hasten to your winter den; snow is on the way." Moween saw the woodchucks, as, heavy with fat, they were now shutting themselves into winter quarters, closing up their doors lest the snow drift into their lodges.

Then Moween, whose furry coat by this time was glossy and thick, began to think anxiously about choosing her winter den. Beneath her brown fur lay pads of warm fat, and when her great flat feet shambled over the trails, her pelt shook and shifted from side to side with every movement of her supple body. Moween had indeed feasted well through the Moon of Falling Leaves; she could well endure the long, cold months of fasting ahead of her. She did

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not care now if the maples were stripped of their red and yellow war robes, and showed gray and naked, or that the winds whined more keenly and with a sharper note among the sharp pointed pine tops, for she was warmly clothed and fat.

But Moween was wise; she knew well enough that Péboam, god of winter, was surely on his way, and she was not surprised when she saw his signals—the first feathery snow flakes as they came timidly sifting, with a hissing, whispering sound, down upon the brown bedded leaves, or sprinkled lightly upon her broad, furry back. Then Moween's red eyes would peer far above into the tall tree tops, and her round ears listened as she heard them groaning, rasping their trunks together, rocking, warring together up above.

One day as Moween wandered far, down through the mountain passes came roaring a mighty blizzard. Screaming, it burst upon her, and she was not ready. Then did the little black bear hurry off to find a safe den where she might sleep through the long, cold winter. For not until the sap began to rise in the maples would she go forth wandering in the forests again. At last, having found a fine place, well hidden beneath a deep, over-hanging ledge, Moween crawled inside, rolled herself into a warm furry ball, and went to sleep.

That winter was very long and cold. It was



" 'HONK, HONK, HONK,' THEY CALLED TO MOWEEN—'HASTEN TO YOUR WINTER DEN; SNOW IS ON THE WAY' "—Page 149

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lonely, too, for the little black bear, but there came a day in early spring when she was no longer alone, for she now had with her three little woolly-coated cubs. Close to their mother's thick, furry side they cuddled, while outside the blizzards still howled, and the snow drifted deep in the passes.

One day a mighty storm raged outside the den; for days and days it lasted. For herself Moween did not mind the storm; she was not afraid. But it made the little cubs restless, and they whined in the darkness, fretfully. Then did Moween's small red eyes begin to stare at them anxiously. Often she would lap their soft wool with her red tongue, as she fondly tried to hush their crying. Well enough the mother bear knew why they were fretful. They were very hungry, and poor little Moween had nothing to give them. Already were her own sides lean and gaunt from long fasting, and each day now she realized she was becoming weaker. It had been a long, cruel winter.

At last Moween could not bear to listen to the whining cubs longer, and so left them to crawl to the mouth of the den. But even as she peered forth, whirls of wet cold snow met her snout, and the harsh voice of Péboam the winter came to her listening ears, as he shouted back to her rudely. So once more she went to the cubs, trying to still their cries, but in vain. Then Moween knew that in spite of the

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storm, she must be brave and go forth to hunt food, or the cubs would starve.

So in the early evening, when the cubs slept, she shambling forth. The storm was now over, but everything was buried deep in the snow; not a living thing was to be seen. Even Meeko the squirrel was in his hollow tree, and little Tookhees the field mouse was somewhere hidden beneath the white snow, deep down in his warm nest. It seemed very lonely to Moween but finally out came the slim silver bow of the new moon. Right over the black mountain it hung. Then, far down in the swamps came a weird call, "Waugh-hoo, waugh-hoo," hooted Koos-koos-koos the great white owl, he of the cat face, and as Moween heard him she began to feel less alone.

What Moween hoped to find was a deer, for meat fare she now craved and nothing would satisfy her great hunger but game. But the deer were so wise that they still remained herded closely in their winter yards. They knew if they wandered out into the open places they would be caught in the deeply drifted passes and perish.

Suddenly Moween heard a slight sound. She raised her head quickly, cocking her round, furry ears, alert and watchful. A shadow flitted over the snow, coming straight towards her. It was a rabbit out after its late supper. Next instant the great flat

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paw of Moween had struck the rabbit. She had it, and she knew her long, cruel fast was ended.

But even before Moween could turn back to the home trail, another shadow fell across the snow. A swift rush of great white wings through the pines, and Koos-koos-koos the cat-faced one, mad with hunger, dashed straight into Moween's eyes and snatched from her the rabbit, bearing it swiftly away in her strong yellow talons, winging her way straight to the swamp.

Poor Moween! She had little strength or courage to hunt longer that night, so, dragging herself wearily back, she crept to the waiting cubs. All day she huddled close to them in the den. Already it seemed to the little bear mother that the whines of her cubs sounded weaker. So when night came again and long blue shadows crept over the snowy trails, unable to endure her hunger longer, Moween again went to the forest.

Plunging and scrambling, Moween made her way down the mountain. She had a plan, and this time she kept away from the swamps, making for distant lowlands—the settlements. Suddenly she raised her frost-rhined snout, snuffing; then whimpering wistfully, as she eagerly scented the cold air. At last it came—that which she hoped for—a wonderful scent; the strong, musky odor of the sheep-fold.

Moween did not mind now the long trail which lay

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between her and the far-off settlement. She only thought of the papoose cubs who waited back there in the den, starving, trusting to her to bring food; whining, urging, nosing her impatiently because they were hungry. Moween's flat feet struck into a shambling, eager run. She had now become so excited that she completely lost her head, forgetting her own weariness. Nothing mattered to her now but that warm, game scent. Whimpering, whining to herself, she tore through the thick scrub spruces, leaving behind torn shreds of her shabby coat. Finally she reached her goal, and climbing quickly over the boards which separated her from the sheep scent, she had soon seized her longed-for prey.

The moon sent thousands of twinkling diamonds across the broad snowy track of the little mother bear as she fairly raced back to the den. No longer did Moween feel either hunger or cold, for in her jaws she was carrying back food to the waiting ones; the long cruel fast was over. Moween had saved her cubs.

CHAPTER XX

FAITHFUL CHEOKHES THE MINK

“CHEOKHES the mink made a grave mistake once in choosing the best place for his lair,” spoke the chief, as he mended the fire. “And this is the way it happened.”

Cheokhes had been very lazy. He had not thought much about building a lodge until late in the season, and when he began to think about it, he suddenly became panic-stricken for fear he would not get his home ready in time for his family. So Cheokhes just poked his pointed snout into a vacant muskrat hole, and he and his mate, finding it roomy and tight, decided to live there.

Now the very reason Musquash the muskrat had deserted this burrow was because the course of the stream above had been so changed by the beavers' dam that the deep water was about a mile above. All the family of Cheokhes the mink are great water lovers and fine swimmers. They must catch their food near deep water. So Cheokhes was not long in finding out his mistake in moving into the deserted muskrat's burrow.

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But after that it was not convenient for Cheokhes to move again, for there were five little ones in the lodge now. Their mother was wise. She never left them alone because of danger, for often strange prowlers stuck their snouts inside the burrow, and the little mink must be guarded until they were old enough to look out for themselves.

So Cheokhes had to go some distance to get to the deeper waters of the pond. One night he started off for food. Through the tall reeds he crept; close to the ground pressed his slim, snaky body. Although he was not afraid, he was constantly on the lookout for either an enemy or game. Poking his low broad head through the wet ferns, his round ears alert, his small red eyes glittering like stars, Cheokhes crept warily over his own well-worn track to the pond.

More than one small, fur-clad wild thing was out that night on a hunt, but they often turned aside, leaving that particular trail, because, when the wind chanced to come their way, they would detect a strong, pungent scent—the mink odor. Well enough they knew that Cheokhes was abroad, out for game, and as they dreaded him, they avoided his trails.

The little mate of Cheokhes had met with an accident which lamed one of her feet, so she had not been able to travel for days. Usually the mink took turns staying in the burrow, but now Cheokhes must do all the hunting for the family. This made him doubly

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impatient to find game, which he must carry back to the lodge, or his mate would perish from hunger.

At last Cheokhes reached the shores of the pond, and crawling carefully out upon a half-submerged log, he lay quite flat, his body in such a position that he could quickly spring into the water. Patiently he lay there waiting for a fish to rise, for they leap high from the water, especially when it is moonlight and the moths flit low over the pond.

"Splash!" A giant trout jumped clear of the water close by. Even before it fell back Cheokhes had deftly caught it. Then, before he thought, being very hungry himself, he was tearing its painted sides, feasting eagerly. He had selfishly eaten the trout. Back to the log went Cheokhes once more, thinking he would soon catch another fish. But this time luck was against him, for clouds had risen, covering the moon. The pond was in darkness, and the fish no longer leaped for white moths.

Still, it was light enough for the mink to see everything, for his sight was doubly strong at night. Besides, in the dark thickets the fireflies had lighted millions of tiny torches, and the sky was thick with stars. Soon Cheokhes, watching, saw a silvery line of bubbles start from a mud bank. He knew what the bubbles meant. It was a young muskrat swimming across to another village.

Slipping silently into the water, Cheokhes was

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soon trailing the muskrat. He had almost overtaken it when "slap, slap, slap," sounded forth a warning to the young muskrat. An old gray-backed sentinel muskrat, on guard, who had been watching from the top of a tall grass tussock, had quickly slapped a warning signal upon the water with his tail. The young muskrat heard it in time to save himself and dodged hastily into a water-subway; then swimming quickly under water, he made his escape.

Twice more did Cheokhes go in pursuit of prey but each time he failed to catch anything. By this time night was fast slipping away, still he had caught nothing to carry home to his wounded mate. Then, just as he was almost in despair, thinking to himself he would have to go home and give up his hunting for that night, right overhead he heard a faint "honk, honk, honking" sound. It was Wap-touk the wild black goose, taking his flock to the pond to rest. They were coming down, flying gradually lower and lower, chattering and gossiping as they descended.

Black and strong-winged were the geese, but they were very weary, for they had flown all night. They would be glad to drop down upon the peaceful waters of the pond. As soon as they settled, giving little quacks of contentment, they began to dive and feed and were so happy that they forgot all danger.

As soon as the geese had quieted down their clam-

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orous quackings, then did Cheokhes, watching his chance from behind a clump of tall reeds, slip quietly into the water. His slim body left no ripple behind, so silently did he swim in the direction of the wild geese. Then having come near enough, the mink dove very deep down and coming quickly up beneath them, he seized one strong, black-webbed foot and dragged the goose beneath the water, even before it had a chance to squawk out an alarm cry to warn the others. Thus did clever Cheokhes the mink win a great prize.

Swimming fast beneath water with the goose was not an easy task for Cheokhes, because the goose was far larger than himself. But at last he managed to reach the shore, and creeping from the water, he shook the wet from his soaking fur. Then, taking a firm hold of his prize, he started off joyously for his lodge, fully a mile distant.

But alas, in spite of his luck, Cheokhes soon became very weary, for he traveled low, and often his prey would catch in the underbrush, pulling him down again and again. But still he was cheered greatly by pleasant thoughts of the fine feast he was taking to his mate. Soon, in spite of his joyous thoughts, Cheokhes was so weary that he almost crawled upon his stomach. Heavier and heavier grew his burden, so that every few rods he laid it down, pausing to rest himself.

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Suddenly Cheokhes' little round ears caught a sound which made him listen. Then he hissed softly to himself in sudden alarm, for right behind him in the deep forest he heard a "scratch, scratch, scratching" sound. Cheokhes knew it was made by some large creature sharpening its claws upon the rough bark of a tree, and hearing it he was afraid, and dropping his prize, peered anxiously forth through the ferns.

The sight which met his anxious eyes so affected Cheokhes that in sudden terror and dismay he leaped aside off the trail and crouched low in the bush, while over his peaked face crept a strange, fearful look—a look of sullen hate, rage, and despair. His whole body shook and trembled, while saliva dripped from his open jaws as he hissed forth his hate. No animal of all the forest, excepting just Cheokhes the mink, is capable of looking so dreadful when he is cornered by an enemy.

Now the creature whom Cheokhes saw, which caused him to look so terror-stricken and hateful, was none other than the dreaded wolverene, who is cousin to the little black bear, and is called "glutton of the woods." It was he whom Cheokhes had heard sharpening his long, white claws; the wolverene was going off on a hunting trip.

The old white-clawed warrior was very hungry, but for that matter he was always hungry. For

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White Claw was such a glutton that he would feast and feast until his skin became as tight as the bark of a gum tree in spring time, and even then he would not hesitate to steal another's food and devour it, no matter how uncomfortable it made him.

Poor tired Cheokhes hidden behind the ferns with his prize! No wonder he feared that White Claw would spy him out and take away his hard-won goose. Yes, already he saw the wolverene sniffing, sniffing suspiciously. He had detected the presence of game close by, also the fetid mink scent. Cheokhes knew that soon all would be lost. He determined to fight bravely, however, so lying there among the ferns, Cheokhes suddenly crouched low, ready to spring out upon his dreadful enemy and fight for his prize.

Just as Cheokhes crouched, however, his gleaming eyes red with hate, watching his chance to spring upon the glutton, he heard a soft "pad, pad, pad," upon the bedded pine needles, and something big, dark, and clumsy shambled into the opening. Stealing in and out between the brown tree trunks it came, and Cheokhes instantly knew it was Moween the little black bear, cousin to White Claw. Still, in spite of their relationship, they were not friends. Peering forth, Cheokhes the mink soon saw that Moween carried fresh game in her mouth.

Instantly the wolverene saw the bear and forgot

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all about the mink nearby, for the game which Moween carried was larger, and would furnish White Claw a greater meal. He decided to follow the bear, and, if possible, overpower her, and make her give up her prize. So, wheeling quickly, White Claw bounded off after Moween, who had disappeared into a spruce thicket.

Once again, then, did Cheokhes take up his goose and start for his lodge. He had not gone far when he heard a frightful commotion in the forest back of him—a noise so terrible that the mink stopped short, his teeth chattering with terror. But—Cheokhes need not have feared for himself. The noise was just Moween and old White Claw who had met, and were having a dreadful battle over the game, which the wolverene was trying to take away from Moween. Snarls, roars and screams echoed through the forest, and then Cheokhes the mink picked up his goose once more and struck into the home trail as fast as he could.

Soon Cheokhes, quite happy to think how he had escaped from old White Claw the glutton, no longer felt weary; he forgot the awful sagging weight of the goose, and at last he reached sight of his lodge, and was very glad. For, you see, Cheokhes the faithful mink had dragged the heavy goose, which was twice his own size, a long, weary mile, just that he might share his prize with his mate.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LOYALTY OF MALSUN THE GRAY WOLF

“It is always best for all tribes, whether of man or beast, to be true to each other; to stand by their kindred when hard pressed by the enemy,” spoke the old chief wisely. “Always have we Indians kept to this rule. So also do some of the wild kindred of the forest; which shows that the Great Spirit guides everything. Listen, and hear of the loyalty of Malsun the wolf.”

Years ago when the Indians roamed freely through the great, trackless Northern forests, Malsun, the big gray timber wolf, and his tribe were not strangers to the red men. “Big brother to the Fox” they called him, and he trod the trails where the red deer herded. Seldom was Malsun hunted by the Indians, and so his tribe increased, roaming the woods in packs.

Finally the pale faces came to the North Country. Then all the wild things who love best the silent, solitary places, moved far back into the wilderness.

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Malsun, leader of the gray wolf pack, went with them, for he began to have many troubles.

First of all, his game was driven away, for giant trees were felled, letting light into their secret, dark hiding places and lairs, and frightening them away from the trails where Malsun and his pack hunted.

Harder still did it become for Malsun to hunt, until finally the savage wolf nature asserted itself and he became bolder, taking his prey wherever he could find it, for the guns of the hunters were against him. At last Malsun and his followers began to prowl about the lodges of the white men, so, finally, they offered a reward for the most daring hunter who would bring back the pelt of Malsun, the old wolf leader. And then came a reign of terror for the wolves. They were hunted and despised, and in revenge they did much mischief, when they could, among the pale-faces, even carrying off a papoose.

Back in the wilderness where the wolves had retreated, lay Owl Lake. Sullen and black are its waters, and beyond lie vast, oozing swamps where the giant balsams, spruces and tamaracks tower to the sky. So deep and dark is this forest that seldom does the sun strike through to the dim wild trails below. Back of the black swamp rises Bear Mountain—a tall jagged cliff, full of ledges. Here, among these ledges the wolf pack made their hidden lairs. It was safe enough. No white man's foot had ever

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found it, for the swamp was a quagmire, unsafe and treacherous to cross, though the light, swift footfall of furry feet trod over it safely.

Now Malsun, oldest of the wolf pack, had been leader for many years. His coarse coat, once glossy and soft, was now dull, ugly and gray, while a heavy ruff of stiff, darker fur bristled fiercely about his neck and down his lean back. Malsun had once lost an eye in fierce battle with a bobcat, which lent to his long, sly face a wicked expression. But his other eye, green and alert, served him very well, and the seven younger, full-grown wolves of his pack, who were perhaps stronger and swifter now than old Malsun, still feared and obeyed him, following him loyally as he kept the pack together and took them safely through many perils.

"Who-o-o-o, ooo," echoed the howling pack, starting off in full cry. There had been a great snow storm which had raged for days and days, but was over at last. The pack had remained huddled together away from the storm for many moons, but now, joyously they broke forth from their retreats howling and whining as they streamed across the swamp like fleet gray shadows in the moonlight. Across the black ice, leaping the great bog tussocks which stood high and ghost-like, hurried the wolves, led by old Malsun, the brave.

"Who-o-o-o, o-o-o," howled the pack, padding

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fleetly after their leader across the black ice of Owl Lake and swiftly on into the forest, where, by common consent they broke ranks, each intent upon a game scent. Once having struck this, again they would rally each other, to follow it in company.

Very crafty was Malsun, and by this time he knew well enough how to avoid the scent of his enemy—man. But his hunger was now keen, his gray sides lank from fasting through the great storm, and he would risk much. So he strayed off the regular trails by himself, seeking the snow-bound runways of the deer.

Now old Malsun knew that if he found game he would be expected to sound a rallying cry which would call together the pack, and the sly old warrior, realizing that he was old and very hungry, determined not to share his plunder with some youngster that night. Malsun well understood about man-made snares; almost uncanny was his power to scent them out. He came to a certain suspicious clearing where the snow was still untracked, but thinner, and soon spied out the three traps which had cunningly been placed near a trail.

Peering anxiously at the traps with his single green eye, scenting them carefully with his long, gray, wrinkled muzzle, Malsun, the crafty, stepped warily, lifting high his feet, lest the steel teeth catch him. He saw plainly enough that the bait was

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tempting, and his jaws watered. But Malsun knew he must give up these tempting morsels, no matter how keenly he desired them. So the wise old wolf, fearing that he might chance to step on another hidden trap, carefully backed his way out of the danger zone, and making a wide detour around the traps, he once more took up a trail fully fifty feet away from the dangerous spot.

"Woo-o-o-o-o, o-o-o," all night the comrades of Malsun howled back and forth their rallying cries to each other through the dark forest. But the south wind had entered the woods, making the snow soft and treacherous, so the deer stayed safely in their retreats, waiting for a freeze, when snow crusts would form, and they would not break through. Vainly then the wolf pack hunted, until at last their all night chase had begun to tire them.

As soon as the yellow rays of the moon slipped away and the cold faint dawn began to appear, then, no matter how hungry they were, the wolf pack would slink back to their ledges again, for seldom did they hunt by daylight.

By this time Malsun, the aged leader, was nearly spent. His ragged, bedraggled gray brush now trailed heavy behind him. He lolled wearily, for he felt old and weak after his all night run. At last, having reached a small clearing, far away from the others, Malsun squatted down upon his haunches

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upon a convenient ice hummock, and whined weakly to himself, for sheer weariness and hunger.

He wondered impatiently where the rest of his pack could be. No longer could his deaf old ears trace their howls through the forest. He had lost them; he was alone. His feet troubled him, and he began to give them close attention. With his broken teeth and long red tongue, he tried to free his toes of the hard, frozen ice pellets.

Just then a twig cracked sharply and Malsun raised his head; instantly he was a warrior on the alert. A loud crash nearby, and a noble antlered buck sprang from cover, crossed the clearing rapidly, and was gone. Malsun could hear the terrorized panting of the deer as he fled. For once the old wolf leader was taken off his guard, so, for a second he did not stir. Then, before he could gather his wits and leap away, something which was not a twig, snapped spitefully close by. It was a new sound to Malsun. Then came something quickly following, not unlike the spiteful humming of Sugge-ma, the musquito, only louder. It stung him cruelly. Like a fire-brand it bit into his flesh, so that he snapped at it impatiently. He would catch it, the impudent thing which had bitten him so cruelly. And so old Malsun never spied the hunter who had aimed at the deer, but whose wild shot had struck Malsun instead.

Again and again the old wolf whirled and snapped

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at his shoulder, where the shot had hit him. It stung him cruelly now, and the warm blood began to trickle through his coarse gray coat. He tried to run on, to find the lost scent of the pack, and managed to travel some distance towards the home trail. Strangely overcome was the old leader, and at last he realized that he was beaten, for behind, his lagging tracks were now red with his blood.

In sudden despair, Malsun raised his head and sent forth into the forest a long, peculiar cry—the alarm call of the gray wolf.

“Wooo-o-o-o,” from afar off came the reply.

The pack had been headed for the swamp, but hearing the alarm call, swiftly they turned about, making off in the direction of that lone call. Like swift gray shadows they ran, noses to ground, from time to time sending forth long, encouraging howls, which reached the ears of their leader.

When at last they came up with him, seeing his sad condition, they closed in about Malsun, as if by common consent nosing him, lapping his bleeding wound, and uttering short, sharp yelps of pity and encouragement. Then, in a close body, still guarding their leader, who got stiffly to his legs, the wolf pack trotted off together, old Malsun in their midst. Suiting their gait to his, they traveled.

Thus did they go back over the long, homeward trail with their wounded leader. Often some young

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wolf would leap ahead as if urging him on to greater effort, always returning to his side to yelp fresh encouragement. It was a long time before the swamps were reached. Weak was old Malsun, and the snow was flecked by his blood as he traveled. But the old warrior, sustained by his tribe, never gave up or fell.

The yellow rays of dawn already touched the ice of Owl Lake when the seven slim gray brethren of old Malsun, bunched about him, crossed over, safely skirting the treacherous bogs of the swamp. At last they reached the ledges safely; they had brought home their old wounded leader.

Thus did the fierce wolf pack show their tenderness to one of their tribe in misfortune, although their reputation is of cruelty to one another. Loyal was the tribe of Malsun the wolf to their leader in his trouble. So do the brave warriors of men look after their fallen in battle.

CHAPTER XXII

THE STORY OF LITTLE ELK

PASSING through the dim, silent woods, suddenly the chief halted, motioning for Little Beaver not to move lest he break a twig. And peering curiously in between the great trunks of the pines, they saw a great hulking black form go crashing grandly off through the underbrush. Before it disappeared it halted an instant, raised its huge head and sent forth sounds so weird and terrible that Little Beaver trembled in his moccasins. First, groans and grunts rumbled forth, ending in a long dismal wailing cry, which shook the forest. Then the huge creature vanished, and the forest was silent.

“Nay, fear not, nor show the coward’s white feather,” spoke the chief, “ ’tis but the call of the great elk. One day you shall learn to imitate his voice so well on the hollow horn, that you may even fool him, for an Indian must know the calls of his wild kindred.

“He who passed over this trail was mighty, and he travels far and fleetly. Even now, on the wind, you can hear the crashing of his hoofs as he climbs

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the mountain slope; his trail lies toward the sunset, over the pass. He is a great warrior, who is seeking his tribe. He is lonely, that old king elk, and goes to find his mate from whom he has strayed.

“That you may know more of the vanishing elk tribes, I will tell you the story of Little Elk, who was deserted by his kindred and followed the trails alone for years.”

Far above the springs and little runnels which feed the broad waters of the Alagash, lived and roamed the elk herds. This is far to the northward, and at that time was a famous hunting ground, well known to the Indians. Here lived great herds of elk, all led by a mighty chief, who was perhaps the largest elk leader ever seen in the north. So old was the king elk, and so tough his hide, it was said no Indian's arrow could ever harm him; that an arrow would turn aside from him without leaving even a mark. At night the mighty rumble of his voice might often be heard rallying, calling his herds together across the mountain ranges.

Very wary was the old king elk. Even the crack of a twig would start him off on a swift run, and so fleetly did he travel, that he was a mile away before an Indian could launch a canoe, or string an arrow.

With his great herd the old king wintered always in a certain safe, sheltered pass, or yard. In spring,

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in the Moon of Bright Nights, the elk herd always worked back to the dense woods to feed upon the sprouting moose-wood and young poplar saplings. Wide spread the antlers of their king, while his coarse mane bristled savagely. He could easily conquer any foe which faced him. He was wise, and when came the season of the stinging black fly, which finds its way into the eyes of the elk, until they become sore, and almost blind; then would the old king seek the pleasant water-ways, and all day long the herd would stand in the water to outwit the tormenting flies.

One day, in the Moon of Mondamin, the sweet corn, the old chief elk maddened by the fly pests, led his herd into a new country, over a strange trail, because the small lakes which they knew had dried out. With long loping strides, his great head thrown back over his shoulders, the king led the great herd trustingly on, until at length they came to a wide black swamp. Standing upon the edge of the marshland, the old leader saw in the very center of the swamps what appeared to him like a deep, refreshing lake. This was good; he longed to plunge his tormented head beneath the deep water and rid himself of his enemies, the black flies. So, bravely the old king charged across the swamp, mad to reach the water, while the herd, who had already spied

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lily pads—choicest fare, which an elk will travel far to seek—blindly followed their leader.

Suddenly, upon reaching the very edge of the strange, sullen lake, the old king elk threw up his massive head and antlers, and uttered a queer warning bellow of fright. Then, floundering, struggling, and moaning, he began to sink lower and lower in the awful sucking quagmire of mud, until he was completely swallowed up and lost to sight. Alas, too late had come the warning bellow of the old leader, for the herd, following him only too readily, were all caught in the treacherous quicksands and swallowed. All were lost of that great elk herd with the exception of Little Elk, a weak yearling calf, who had not quite managed to keep up with the rest, and so halted, just before he reached the shifting sands, where, hearing the warning of the old king, he wisely turned back before it was too late.

Little Elk was badly frightened and amazed over the strange disappearance of the whole herd, right before his very eyes, and with terrified bellows and wheezing breath he instantly turned about and ran to hide himself in the deep forest. For many moons he was afraid, but gradually his courage came back, and he ventured abroad again. But he was wise enough to avoid the evil lake, and never went in that direction again. All alone wandered the young elk in the forest until at last came Péboam, the winter,

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and he somehow managed to find his way back to the old yard where the herd always had wintered. Here Little Elk stayed until the ice left the streams, and the snow thinned on the sunny sides of the hills.

It was during April, the Moon of Bright Nights, when the horns of Little Elk began to sprout. Very fast they grew, so that by fall they were strong enough to toss Pekompf the wildcat from his path. For Little Elk was as brave as he was strong. Thus, because of his strength the forest wild soon learned to know and respect him. Often, now, Moween the little black bear would leave a really fine log full of ants, when she heard a distant "chop, chop, chopping" sound; a noise which Little Elk made by clashing together his jaws. Then would Moween whine too, and cuff her cubs, hurrying them out of the way of Little Elk, as she herself shambled and hid behind some ledge to watch his passing.

Now, although as years went by Little Elk was both brave and strong, he was also very lonely, because he had no companions. Changed too was his heart, until he grew so fierce and ugly that he became the terror of the forest trails. Every creature now fled when it heard his great body crashing wildly through the woods. His coarse mane, now stiff and high, seemed always to bristle with rage down the length of his back, like a war bonnet, while his great antlers were so wide and powerful that they might

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easily toss a pony. Thus did Little Elk, the mighty one, range the forest trails alone and unloved.

Fortunately for the lonely elk, it was willed by the Great Spirit that he should not die of loneliness, for through the wisdom of the great Chief of the pale faces, a wise law was made to bring from afar many elk to take the place of the vanishing elk tribes of the north. Many moons did the strange elk travel, shut into the cars which wind like serpents across the plains. Strangely shy and sick at heart were they when at length their long journey was ended. But soon they were made glad by the sight of our great northern forests, with their long woodsy trails and rippling streams.

One day Little Elk of the Alagash was feeling very lonely and sick at heart. All wild kindred of the forest were afraid of him, and shunned him when he crashed over the trails, although he really would have been glad to make friends with some of them, so lonely was he. Unable to keep his sorrow and longing for company to himself, the poor lonely elk, standing upon a high crag overlooking the valley, stretched forth his huge head and sent a long-drawn, pleading cry far across the valley. It echoed back again from the blue mountains beyond, just as it always did when he called. Many, many times did he send forth his lonely cry; no reply came back to

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him but the impudent scream of Dee-dee-askh, the blue jay, who always mocked him.

Crashing down from the crag, Little Elk entered the deep forest trails. All was silent in the woods. Once again the lonely elk sounded his call. Then, even before its echoes had died out, right through the dim aisles of the giant spruces, he heard an answering call. Again came a reply, and soon he had caught up with a stranger, a young cow elk. They soon became acquainted in true elk fashion, rubbing together their velvety noses.

Then did Little Elk, no longer lonely, proudly raise his great antlered head, and taking the lead, brought his companion to a fine lily pond where the water lapped pleasantly about them, and where they feasted long on pink lily roots. Here they stayed until moonrise, quite hidden by the tall pines which completely surrounded their safe retreat. Then, together they shambled contentedly off down the dim forest trails through which the moon filtered softly; and after that time Little Elk was never alone again.

“The one whom we heard pass is perhaps kin to Little Elk,” said the old chief, “for now his tribe has increased and spread throughout our northland forests. Pleasant to me is the call of the moose once more in our land.”

CHAPTER XXIII

WABUN, THE FAITHFUL WOLF DOG

WHEN the sweet grass grew tall in the swamps, Little Beaver gathered it for his grandmother, who wove it into baskets, in the moonlight, outside the lodge. As they sat there the old chief looked far off, searching the shadows. Little Beaver hoped for a story, but waited patiently, as he always did. Nearby slept the dogs. A long-drawn howl came from afar off, making them stir uneasily in their sleep, while some of them awoke and pointed their snouts, scenting some wild thing.

“What was that, Grandfather?” asked Little Beaver. “Was it old Pekompf the bobcat who wailed then?”

“No, the voice which makes the dogs restless was not that of Pekompf the bobcat, but the wolf call. They recognize the voice of the wolves, for some among our village dogs are close kin to Malsun the gray wolf.

“It is good to have a kind heart, but better still to have a brave one, also. That you may understand

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this, listen, and you shall hear the story of Wabun, my faithful wolf dog."

Once, many years ago, when I was a boy your age, the wolves were many throughout the North Country where our tribes lived. We had mighty hunting trips then, for the wolves had become so bold that they came close to our camps, and a tale was told that one of them had carried away a papoose. The fur pelt of the wolf is thick and warm and we needed them in our lodges against the time when winter should come whining through the poles of the tepee.

Often, as a great mark of honor, the boys of the village went forth with their elders upon the hunt, because they were of use. They fell behind upon their ponies, helping to bring back the pelts, which the squaws always cured for our winter clothing.

One day, after following the hunt long, I lagged behind the others on my pony, for he had stepped into a rabbit hole and ran lame. The country which we were crossing was wild and strange. Suddenly my pony shied from the trail, and I saw something alive ahead of him. As we drew nearer I soon saw it was a young wolf cub. Just a baby was he, wandering off alone, whining, searching like a papoose for his mother.

Soft and tawny was the fur of the wolf cub; puppy-like were its eyes as they looked into mine,

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all unafraid, not knowing its danger. So I took the little wolf cub inside my skin shirt and carried him back to camp. Saying nothing to the others, I left the wolf cub with a mother dog and her pups, and to my joy she adopted the strange one as her own. I never spoke of my wolf dog to the other boys, because I knew they would be only too glad to kill a wolf cub.

Wabun, the morning star, I named him, because at night when I came to him, his eyes would gleam forth at me out of the darkness like glowing yellow stars. In time Wabun took his training and began to work with the other dogs. I taught him all he knew, but never with the lash. I made him his first harness, and he helped me drag faggots from the forest to our lodge in winter time. No dog of the pack could carry such a load, or endure so well the long hard trails as Wabun, my wolf dog. So, when the village moved, it was Wabun alone who dragged the heavy poles of our tepee.

Soon he became known as a mighty leader, and his fame even spread among other tribes. No other village dog had such a fine pelt as Wabun, and he carried his beautiful plummy tail proudly curled over his back, never slinkingly, as do most of the wolf tribe. I, his master, fed him, and many a fine feast of salmon we had together, for well I knew where the painted fish leaped high at sunrise and sunset.

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Together we shared each other's joys and sorrows. It was the fine thick fur upon the back of Wabun which warmed and comforted me in winter, as he huddled close to me like a brother. The Indian's dog has love for but one master, and he never forgets a kind one.

One spring our tribe roamed far across the trails of other tribes. Far to northward we journeyed, where the snows last long, and the dogs must work hard, often whipped to pull heavy loads, which they had not strength to do.

One morning, on this trip, there was much sorrow in our midst, for my dog brother, my Wabun, was gone. In the night some enemy from another tribe had stolen into our camp and taken away my wolf dog. Long I mourned, and for days and days, secretly and alone, I followed many trails seeking the robber, until at last without him, I had to go back to our village. Already my people were preparing to move southwards to the great rivers where they always speared the salmon, which the squaws would dry for our winter fare.

Bitterly and quite secretly I mourned for Wabun, and although my heart was heavy, an Indian boy must always be brave and never show his sorrows lest the others laugh at him. None knew how I missed my wolf dog from his place at my shivering back in winter when it grew bitterly cold in the long

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nights, all through the bleak Moon and Snow Shoes. I never cared to win the affection of any other dog; all were unlike my great wolf dog, for they were but plain, snapping, flea-bitten curs, while Wabun had been a king, a chief among other dogs.

Once, one of our tribe who went into the northern fur country to barter furs, remembered to ask news of Wabun. When he returned he told how a great chief's son now owned my wolf dog. He had seen Wabun, but told me that his spirit had been nearly broken by ill treatment, the lash, and hunger, while his eyes gleamed red now with hate, and he snarled and snapped at every one who came within his reach. No longer was he a favorite with his cruel young master, who already feared him.

When I heard this news of Wabun I became very angry, but I bided my time. My day would surely come; then I would go into that far north country and rescue my poor Wabun.

Years passed before that time finally came. Then my father sent my brother and me to trade peltry, for he was now old. The way was long, but pleasant. Two moons and two suns we journeyed on our ponies, taking our time, hunting, fishing, even visiting our kindred. One day we somehow managed to take a wrong trail and so strayed far from our road. Darkness came upon us, and my brother and I were

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far apart, for each of us had set off in a different direction to find the lost trail.

Giant pines towered close about me, their sharp dead branches piercing me like spear points. Then my pony suddenly stumbled, and without being able to save myself I fell to the ground. My head struck a sharp stone and I was stunned. I lay there a long time, but when at last I opened my eyes, I shouted loudly for my brother. No answer came back.

It was night. High overhead, from where I lay, I saw between the tree tops the silvery stars shining down upon me like watchful eyes; they were company for me in my loneliness. The wind spirits were in the trees, sighing and sobbing together over my head. Mahug the great white loon screamed close by; there must be water near at hand. If I could but reach it!

Koos-koos-koos the white owl spoke gruffly to his mate right over my head, and I saw the gleam of his big yellow eyes in the darkness, and heard the swish of his wide wings as he flew off into the shadows.

Then, as I listened, I heard another cry—"Woo-o-o-o——o o." It was the long, rallying howl of the wolves. Many voices answered the long challenge—the pack was a large one, and *they were coming my way.*

In vain did I try to reach my pony who cropped

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the bushes some distance from me. My leg was stiff now and I could not move it. I sank back in despair, and even as I did so I saw many swift gray shadows come stealing in and out between the great pine trees. It was the wolf pack! They were upon me, and I gave myself up for lost.

Next instant, a great gray wolf, leader of the pack, had sprung out upon me; soon his long cruel teeth would rend me, I knew. Then, when I was most miserable, a strange thing happened. Suddenly the great wolf leader raised his snout high, and uttered a long, mournful howl, followed by another—a yelp of recognition and delight; the cry which a dog makes when overcome. Then a hot rough tongue began to lap my face affectionately, and the soft whining went on.

I knew that whine. I had heard those soft whimp-erings many times before, and I reached up my hand and felt in the thick ruff of coarse gray fur about the big wolf neck, for I was feeling for something. Would I find it? I did, and it was the remains of an old deer skin collar; the collar I had long ago fastened around Wabun's neck. It was he, Wabun my wolf dog! He had finally deserted his cruel master, choosing to go back again to his wolf kindred, rather than be treated hatefully by a coward.

My arms went up tight around the rough neck of Wabun. How happy we were there together. I

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forgot my pains, even my lost brother and the trail. Wabun whined and nosed me, seeming to understand that I was in trouble. He knew me well, his old master. Then, suddenly he left off his joyful whining, and raising his head an instant, without taking his big paws from my breast, he listened intently. Then peering into the shadows with blazing green eyes, he snapped his jaws angrily—the wolf pack, his followers, were close at hand. They were even then impatiently watching us from the dark bushes; already they waited for the signal of their chief to charge upon me, their prey.

One more quick, affectionate lap of the long red tongue my wolf dog gave me—it was the touch of farewell. Then Wabun did a strange thing. He suddenly leaped high in the air, clear of me, darting away, and at the same time uttering a sharp cry of fear, as if warning the waiting wolves to keep away—danger was there. Hearing this warning cry from their leader, the wolves silently slunk back into the dark shadows of the forest. Then, far ahead I heard a loud rallying cry—it was Wabun, commanding his followers to join him; summoning the pack away from me.

“Woo-o-o-o, ooo,” sounded his call. Wabun was already far away; he was running fast, taking the wolves off upon another trail, far away from his wounded master. I strained my ears to catch that

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long, long call, which now came faintly, and at last died away, leaving the forest still; I heard the voice of Wabun no more.

Never again did I hear his voice or see him, but I was content, even happy, when I now thought of him. For had he not escaped from cruelty and hunger, and was he not once more happy with his tribe? But best of all—Wabun my wolf dog had proved faithful to me, his master, who had always treated him with respect and kindness, even as a brother.

Of course my own brother found my trail, and at sunrise we again mounted our ponies and rode to the northward.

CHAPTER XXIV

WAWONAISSA, SINGER IN THE DARK

“WHIP-perri-will, whip-perri-will,” mimicked Little Beaver, answering a soft call coming from the dark alder bushes, fringing the brook. So well did he imitate the whip-poor-will, that even the old chief was deceived, and chuckled saying—

“Well have you learned the plaintive call of Wawonaissa, singer in the dark; you tricked him then; listen, he answers, thinking his mate calls.”

One spring, early in the pleasant Moon of Leaves, Wawonaissa, with many of her tribe, settled in a certain hollow, where each year she came to raise her brood. Scratching together a few pine needles and little twigs, she then plucked down from her speckled breast to line her nest, and it was finished.

Mysterious and shy were the ways of Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will, but at night, as soon as she and her mate had satisfied their first pressing hunger, skimming low over the marshes for gnats and moths, then they would begin their evening song. “Whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will,” first one

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bird would quaver, very far off. Then another neighbor nearby would finish "poor-will." First, little Wawonaissa always started her strange song with a sharp "churp," then in low, soft rhythm she would commence her real song. Often, as a boy, being cowardly, I would hear the song of the brown night bird from afar off, as it echoed through the forest, and, as I listened, I was not afraid of the darkness.

"Whip-perri-will, whip-perri-will, whit, whit, whit," would call Wawonaissa, rolling forth the "perri" sound as she sang. Wawonaissa is the only singing bird we have in the Northland who sings all night, and we Indians have named her well—Wawonaissa, singer in the dark.

Now when Wawonaissa began her nest building, it was already late, for Koos-koos-koos the great white owl, had settled herself in the blasted pine, and there were three young, chuckle-headed owlets in her untidy nest. The owlets were now old enough to clamber up out of the deep nest of Koos-koos-koos, and perch upon a limb at twilight, where they sat, all in a row, blinking, snapping their bills, and waiting for the old owls to bring back food to them.

Had Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will but known that the great white owl had made her nest that year so near her own favorite hollow, she would surely not have decided to settle there. Worse still—another, a much more dreaded neighbor there was,

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who had his lair that year not so very far distant from the whip-poor-will hollow. This was none other than sly old Kagax the weasel. If Wawonaissa had not been so busy nest building, she might have seen him as he stole in and out among the sheltered places, his round ears laid flat, his sharp red eyes glowing and snapping, as he went hissing along, peering craftily about, like a hunter upon the trail.

Kagax was watching, waiting, biding his time, when the strange brown birds in the hollow should be settled. Then, when there were young fledglings in the whip-poor-will nest, he planned to visit them. Kagax licked his furry chops with his sharp red tongue, showing his cruel teeth as he grinned to himself, anticipating the great feast he would have if he waited patiently.

So you see, with all her care, Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will, arriving so late in the season, had not found out about her near neighbors, but had innocently settled right in the very midst of her enemies' camp. The whip-poor-wills did not begin their peaceful night songs until they had become quite used to their new quarters, for they were very shy, and they liked to feel quite at home before they began their singing. But their neighbors, the owls, Kagax the weasel, and others, did not need to hear them sing to know they had arrived; well enough

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they knew the whip-poor-wills had come to the hollow.

Beautiful were the two eggs which at last the little brown mother, Wawonaissa, cuddled beneath her speckled breast. Of pure creamy white they were, speckled over with lilac and red spots. Faithful was she, and when she left her nest for a short flight, her mate always took her place upon the nest, lest the beautiful eggs chill. So fine and gallant was he, that always, lest she become discouraged or weary, just at twilight, he would perch not very far away upon an old stump, right in plain sight of the nest, and sing and sing his plaintive song.

"*Churp!* Whip-perri-will, whip-perri-will," he would pipe. Then, away down in her pine needle nest, Wawonaissa herself would call softly back—"Whit, whit, whit."

Such shyness, such secret goings and comings now had the whip-poor-wills, that no one but those as experienced in the ways of the wild as sly Kagax and the owls, could have told you much about little Wawonaissa, and her hidden nest, so close to the ground. But when the weather was fine, on warm clear nights, especially when the moon was big and yellow, then were the whip-poor-will family very active, and they usually sang until dawn. But when it rained, then they would huddle together, flat among the leaves, for well they knew it was not very

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much use to go forth gnat hunting in the wet weather, because the insects always hid themselves beneath sheltering leaves, and not until the soft May winds dried off the wet leaves, would the gnats take wing again. Then, as soon as Wah-wah-tay-see, the little flitting fireflies, began to show their tiny yellow torches, flying up from the moist fern thickets, Wawonaissa and her tribe would stir abroad.

Silently, like swift winged shadows, the long brown wings of Wawonaissa would skim up out of the darkening hollow. Leaping into the air, very deftly she would snap many gnats on the wing. But never very high above the ground would she venture, and sometimes she would alight and turn over roots and leaves to hunt for insects, especially when the wind blew hard. Then she would search leafy hiding-places, or under the bark of trees for food. Wawonaissa was awkward upon her feet, and as she scrambled up and down the tree trunks she balanced herself upon her short legs, as she searched the crevices for silver-winged moths and grubs.

Wawonaissa was very timid, and should she hear a twig snap, or feel danger near her, she had a strange, wise way of hiding herself. Swiftly she would turn her long slim body about, lying in just the same direction in which the grain of the bark grew. Close to the tree trunk she would then flatten

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herself, and you could never see her, for her brown feathers matched the bark so well that she was always safely hidden.

When she flew abroad for gnats, Wawonaissa would snatch up a whole mouthful at one time, because she had a very large mouth, larger than any other bird in the forest, of her size; for her mouth stretched wide, from ear to ear, when she opened it. This proved to be a lucky thing for her, as she later discovered. Upon each side of her great mouth bristled a set of long, fine hairs; with these Wawonaissa could feel her way in the darkness, just as Upweekis the lynx, and others of the cat tribe do with their stiff whiskers.

Wawonaissa and her mate were excited and proud over their brood; two little things, clothed in yellowish, downy feathers, which matched so well the golden brown beech leaves. And, but for their wide gaping mouths, which were open most of the time for food, you would have passed their hiding-place carelessly by, thinking, if you saw them, that they were just two fuzzed-out balls from the sycamore tree overhead.

The small whip-poor-wills were always very quiet, for this Wawonaissa had early taught them. Always did their nearby neighbors, the young crows, grumble and scream from daylight until dark; while Dee-dee-askh, the blue jay and his family fought

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and yelled at sunrise. But the little whip-poor-wills lay still in their nest, and should a leaf rustle beneath some stealthy wild foot, or a twig crack, then they would hasten to flatten themselves close to the ground, never moving.

Strangely silent, too, were the old birds when they flew. While Mitches the partridge, and others, whirred noisily forth, beating loudly with their wings and waking the forest echoes, the slim brown wings of Wawonaissa and her mate made no more sound than does the velvet wing of a bat or moth in flight.

One night when the moon was big and round, and shone through the tall pines, leaving silvery trails through the dark forest, many things began to happen. It seemed as if everything which traveled upon four feet was abroad that night. For dark clumps of bushes parted, as yellow eyes peered out. Tall brakes wavered and shook with the passing of furry ones, then closed behind them silently, as they passed on. Bats squeaked shrilly; the white moths unfurled their soft wings; and up aloft, in the sentinel pine, Koos-koos-koos the owl and her family were stirring.

Koos-koos-koos was busily preening her great wings, getting ready for an all night hunting trip. Wisps of down floated gently from her perch, and her great yellow eyes gleamed as she snapped her

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strong beak. Twigs cracked far down below. Mahug the loon screamed for sudden joy, as he dove deep for a pickerel, and caught it. Then, close to the hollow began the lonely song of the whip-poor-wills.

“Whip-perri-will, whip-perri-will,—perri-will.”

Wawonaissa and her mate flew out, like long, darting shadows. All night they flew, but as soon as the gray dawn began to show, and the white mists which followed the brooks commenced to lift, then they flew silently homewards. But that had been a dreadful night, because, when most of the whip-poor-wills came back at dawn to their nests, they found them quite empty. Koos-koos-koos had also been abroad that night and very hungry and savage was she. Silently she would flit to some low-hanging bush, and crouching there, her great blazing eyes watched, waiting her chance; whenever a young whip-poor-will perched nearby, Koos-koos-koos would snatch it, and bear it aloft to her watch tower nest. Now, as day dawned, the white ruffled feathers into which she had sunk her head in slumber, were still stained red with the life blood of the whip-poor-wills which she had slain.

Night after night did the old owl continue to prey upon the whip-poor-will tribe, until at last many of the nests were empty both of old birds and fledgelings. Another there was also, who had not



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WHIP-POOR-WILL TRIBE"—Page 194

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forgotten about the whip-poor-wills. This was Kagax the weasel, for now his time had come.

One night Wawonaissa, who had lost her mate, perched nearby, and saw a terrible tragedy. Old Kagax stole down from his ledge, and threaded his way straight for whip-poor-will hollow, where a few nests still remained. On came crafty Kagax; nest after nest he visited, and soon his whiskered snout was blood stained. Snarling to himself, and hissing, he showed a jagged row of needle-pointed teeth, which made little Wawonaissa, who watched him, cower flat down against the alder limb until he had passed by. Clinging there she saw much more. The cruel weasel visited nest after nest, dragging forth her neighbors' young ones, and after satisfying his own greed, he snatched an old bird in his blood-stained jaws and hurried to his lair with it, for Kagax the weasel had young ones to feed.

Now Wawonaissa had built her nest somewhat apart from the colony, which was wise, for neither the weasel, nor the great owl had yet discovered it. But well enough the whip-poor-will knew he would come back, and rob her nest. Oh yes, Kagax the cruel, crafty one, would surely find her two fledgelings, and she knew she must hurry and get them away before the weasel came back.

Fleetly, silently, her long, slim wings skimmed low, as she darted down to her own nest, and seizing

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one helpless, downy fledgeling in her wide mouth, she rose in the air. Almost too heavy was the young bird for her to carry in long flight, but still, bravely on she flew with her precious burden. And when she had reached a safe, hidden nook she dropped it gently down upon the moss and leaves, and flew swiftly off again after the other one. But would she be in time to save it from the hateful fur-coated robber?

Just as Wawonaissa reached the nest, hovering above it, she saw the cunning, pointed snout of the weasel, as he poked it through the reeds; already he had scented her nest. She must act quickly to get ahead of him.

Like a dart she hurled herself, wide-spread at the weasel's head; right into his very eyes she flew, beating him with her wings, and stunning him for a second. Then, before Kagax could recover himself, Wawonaissa opened her mouth widely to seize the little fledgeling. But, unfortunately, it fell back helplessly into the nest. Already the evil, fetid, scent of the weasel's breath reached Wawonaissa; he was close at hand. Bravely, again the mother bird swept low and this time she lifted the fledgeling high above the nest; above the wedge-like head of the weasel, who, baffled of his prey, sent after her a hiss of hate and disappointment.

There, in a new, safe nest did little Wawonaissa,

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the brave whip-poor-will begin a new life. And soon she felt less lonely, for the young birds were large enough to fly forth into the night with her. Then did the forest all about them ring again with their low, sweet calls, as they darted like swift brown shadows across the moonlit meadows and waterways, singing, calling all through the night—

“Chut! Whip-*perri*-will, whip-*perri*-will, whit, whit, whit.”

CHAPTER XXV

THE BADGE OF THE RED WING BLACK BIRD

"H-WA-KER-EE, con-quer-ee, o-ka-lee," mimicked Little Beaver, listening to the clear song of the red wing blackbird.

"Ha, you imitate his cry well," spoke the chief. "'Tis the first clear bird call of springtime. A brave pioneer is the red wing blackbird, and sweet is the sound of his singing, for it tells us that the long reign of Péboam the winter is past."

"There he flies," spoke Little Beaver. "His coat is glossy and black, and he seems proud of the two blood red marks on his wings."

"Well he may be," replied the chief, "for those scarlet feathers are to him like the eagle feathers an Indian brave wins in battle. A great brave is this little bird. Listen, and you shall hear how he won his red feathers, his badge."

A long time ago, very early one spring, even before the thick black ice left the lakes of the great north, Wa-wa the black goose, leader of his tribe, had planned his long flight to the north. He was

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eager to leave the hot swamps of the south, for his feathers were heavy and so thick that he could not stay late in the torrid heat down there, where it is always summer.

Usually, the other migrating birds waited for the geese to go first, so, as early as he could, Wa-wa, leader of the flocks, would form his flying wedge and go honk, honk, honking away through the skies.

Wa-wa, leading his companions, had journeyed far. Wearily they flapped their wings as they flew league after league, sometimes mounting very high in the air, so high that they could look down upon the little clouds far beneath them.

When the little Indian children in the villages far down below the geese, peeped forth from the flap of the wigwams, they saw the shadows of small black forms flitting straight across the big yellow moon. Then they would shiver, saying to their grandmothers—"See, the Jeebi, the ghosts, are passing across the big moon, and there are many of them."

But their elders would laugh and scoff at their fright saying—"Nay, foolish ones, 'tis not the Jeebi, the ghosts, which you see up there. 'Tis only Wa-wa, the great black goose leading his company to the north. On his great strong wings he flies, and he calls down to us saying—"honk, honk, honk." Péboam the god of winter has gone, no longer will

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he come to shake his cold white feathers above the poles of the tepee, for lo, the pleasant Moon of Leaves is on the way."

Now when old Wa-wa the wild goose and his tribes reached a certain spot about midway between the north and south, they saw ahead of them a giant cloud very black and very thick, moving rapidly towards them. Right in the sky it arose. Then Wa-wa thought to escape the giant cloud with a wide sweep of his company, but as soon as the geese caught up with the black cloud they saw it was nothing less than a mighty flock of small birds who had gone on ahead of them, now returning to the south again as fast as they could travel.

First, old Wa-wa the black goose saw Owaissa the bluebird; like a patch of blue sky appeared his flock. Next followed the redbreasted robins, and many others. When the great company of birds met the wild geese, they signaled that they had news, and so they all settled to earth, the water birds resting upon the lake, the bluebirds by themselves, and each tribe together.

There they held council with much chattering, telling how they had given up journeying to the far north and were hastening back to the Southland again. The very first pioneers that spring happened to be the bluebirds, and when they came to the beginning of the great spruce forests of the north, they

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were met and turned back by a solid wall of thick black smoke. So wide and overwhelming was this smoke, and so hot, that they could not fly around it.

Far down beneath them, as they flew, the blue-birds heard wild cries of alarm and pain from the wild brethren of the forest, as they fled before the wall of fire and smoke. When the smoke curtain lifted a little they could see them all in flight—Moween, the little black bear and her cubs, the deer, Upweekis the panther, dull-witted Unk-wunk, the porcupine—all madly fleeing ahead of the flames. And with such a great fire raging in their northern forests the birds feared no spot would be left for them to build their nests; that all would be blackness and ruin. So back south they were now flying.

Now, as it happened, all the birds might have returned to the south that summer, but for the courage of the leader of all the blackbirds. He wore a plain coat of rusty black feathers and was smaller in size than the robin, but he had a big, brave heart the little blackbird leader.

So he offered to leave the birds and fly back north through the thick black smoke cloud which he knew would not spoil his already shabby black feathers. He would find out for himself, and for the others, if there was a way to get *beyond* the smoke, and if there still remained, back of that awful fire, green, unburnt forests which the fire spirit had spared.

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After the brave blackbird had offered his services as a scout, his cousin, the bobolink, who liked to show off, and was a boaster, agreed to accompany the blackbird on his perilous journey to seek the green forests.

In those days the blackbird and his cousin, the bobolink, were not feathered as they now are. For the blackbird wore just plain black, while the bobolink had pale yellow markings on his quills, just to show he was a bobolink instead of a plain blackbird.

Right on ahead flew the noisy bobolink screaming back boastfully, "bobolink, bobolink," and as he began to smell the smoke he called back "whew, whew, whew, see me, see me,"—this, just to show *he* was leading the way. But as the bobolink came nearer the smoke, he soon forgot his boasting call and began another screaming, "chee, chee, chee," and in great fright he whirled swiftly about just as he came to the smoke cloud, and winged away swiftly to the Southland again.

Not so the brave little blackbird. When he reached the thick black curtain of smoke, what did he do? Without waiting for it to rise up and meet him, to put out his eyes; up, and up, and up, mounted the rusty little blackbird, soaring, and singing like the lark as he rose in the air.

"Po-quer-ee, po-quer-ee, you can't conquer me!" Finally he was so very high up in the sky he could

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see right over the top of the black smoke clouds. Then came along gentle Shaw-on-da-see, the south wind, and helped the wing-weary little blackbird right across miles and miles of awful flame-swept forests, right over into a pleasant country where all was still green and beautiful. Then the blackbird knew that there were still plenty of green places left in the forest for the bird tribes to nest in, beyond the black smoke cloud.

So the blackbird flew straight back to the birds again to carry to them the good news, and they were all filled with rejoicing as they quickly formed into companies and started to northward again, the little blackbird flying on ahead to lead them to the green forests beyond the black smoke.

Ever since that time has the blackbird arrived *first* in the spring, in the North Country. Sometimes the bluebird gets ahead of him, but not often, unless the blackbird forgets himself, and tarries too long to feed on rice in the swamps of the Southland.

But since the time when the blackbird acted as a brave scout, pioneering the migrating birds to safety, he has worn a bright red spot at the base of each black wing. Some of our wise men say it is where two fire brands fell upon his black wings, when he bravely went through the great fire cloud. But no—the Great Spirit of the woods left it there.

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It is a red badge—his war feathers—showing he is brave.

As for the boasting bobolink, think not that he escaped punishment for his cowardly part in leaving the blackbird his cousin, and flying back to escape the fire cloud. He also received a mark. The bobolink's wings were then touched with two white spots at their base, and when he spreads his wings in flight and calls "see, see, see," plainly you can see how he has been branded with the white feather, which is the mark always of cowardice. This he will carry forever.

See then that you never win such a mark, for 'tis never worn or coveted by a true brave.

CHAPTER XXVI

HOW LITTLE BEAVER SAVED THE WAR EAGLE

HIGH upon Loon Mountain, just below its lofty pinnacle, is a jagged spur. There, in a blasted pine, whose top had been struck by lightning, Chep-laghan, the king of bald eagles, made his lonely home for many seasons.

Well enough the Indians knew of the home and haunts of Chep-laghan, for his feathers were highly prized and used by the braves to decorate their war bonnets, and many a young Indian proudly wore a war eagle's feather in his hair as a reward for courage.

Below the jagged spur where the eagle nested, other saw-like crags arose, while all about them, creeping to the very base of the main crag, grew a dense wilderness. In this jungle lived the wild things. Pekompf the wildcat had a lair there; in a certain deep cavern lived the black bear family; and higher up, beneath a jutting ledge, lurked Lhoks, the great tawny panther and his mate. No one disturbed them there; the place was given over to the wild kindred of the forest.

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Many a time, from far beneath in the valley, Little Beaver watched the old eagles dart forth from the blasted pine. Straight out they flew, and like floating leaves he saw them spread their wide wings, soaring high. Then, as he still watched them, although they appeared mere specks in the sky, he would see them dart down, straight as a plummet, to snatch a fish from the silvery waters of Loon Lake.

Often, Little Beaver, watching old Chep-lahgan, wished himself an eagle, instead of an Indian boy. It would be splendid to be a great war bird like Chep-lahgan, thought he. Finally, there came a time when Little Beaver knew there were young eaglets in the lofty home of the old eagle, and gradually the idea of climbing Loon Crag to visit the nest took possession of him.

What a brave feat that would be; to climb Loon Crag! No other Indian boy had ever attempted it, for, while at the base of the peak grew dense forest, above, the crag towered gray and smooth, offering no foothold for man or beast. Little Beaver knew about the wild jungle which he would have to penetrate before he could ever reach the base of the crag. Often too, he had heard the awful scream of Lhoks the panther up there; especially upon moonlight nights, had he heard the cry.

But at last came a time when Little Beaver actu-

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ally determined to wait no longer; he was filled with secret longing to make the awful climb. Besides, he hoped to catch a glimpse of the small eaglets in their lofty nest.

Early one morning Little Beaver, mounted upon his spotted pony, left the village, following, for a time, well-known trails. But when he reached a certain notch, he struck into wild, unbroken forests of spruce and pine, heading towards Loon Crag. When he reached its steep base, which led through the wild jungle, Little Beaver hobbled his pony, leaving it to graze, and pushed on alone.

He thought little of the terrible climb which lay before him, but distances are very deceptive on the mountains, and he climbed one notch-like spur after another, only to find still another above him. Slipping, sliding back from great rocks dripping with oozing moisture, he kept bravely on, until his moc-casins were hanging in tatters to his feet. At last he reached the foot of the main crag, whose dizzy pinnacle towered high above him. Could he climb it?

Oh, but it was a brave thing to do, to climb Loon Crag! How he would boast of his act among the boys of the village—perhaps they would even permit him to wear an eagle's feather in his hair. Little Beaver, gaining fresh courage at these thoughts, determined to press on. No thought had he now of

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Pekompf the wildcat, nor did he imagine the dangers which actually lurked in the deep rocky crevices nearby, from which many a furtive watcher saw his coming. He failed, in his eagerness, to hear the muffled, snarling growl of Lokhs the panther, as she lashed her long tail against her tawny sides, padding softly back and forth upon her home ledge, jealously guarding her cubs.

Reaching up, Little Beaver seized the tough root of a scraggy hemlock clinging to the rocks. Just as he was about to pull himself up, to his horror, the root suddenly snapped and gave way, and amid a shower of loose stones and shale, he began to slip and slide, until he reached the base of a giant boulder several feet below.

Almost before he realized what had happened to him, Little Beaver's startled ears heard a well-known sound. It was louder than the whizzing shrill of Pah-pak-kee-na the grasshopper, the sound which he heard, and then very close by, he saw what looked like a glittering band of bright wampum, *which moved*. But Little Beaver knew instantly it was *not* a wampum belt which he saw, but Kena-beek, the diamond-marked, rattling serpent, whose fangs hold death medicine when they strike.

Already had Kena-beek sounded once his hollow warning to Little Beaver. Now he coiled; he was making ready to spring upon him! Brown and yel-

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low were the wampum-like markings upon the serpent, and somehow they charmed and held the eyes of Little Beaver, as they flashed in the hot sunshine. The sight held him chained, so he did not stir. Again came the metallic, buzzing rattle; the serpent's coils tightened, soon it would spring. At the sight Little Beaver's heart suddenly turned faint. Then, something happened—and just in time!

Right out of the sky, far over Little Beaver's head, sounded a mighty rushing of wide wings descending. The next instant Chep-lahgan, the great war eagle had darted downwards like a snow avalanche when it leaves the mountain-side. Seizing the serpent fearlessly in his great yellow talons, still buzzing and whirring its tail angrily, the eagle bore it far aloft to his nest on the dizzy crag. And Little Beaver was saved! He did not attempt to climb further, but made his way thankfully down to where his pony nickered a welcome to him, and mounting, he rode swiftly back to the village.

Now Lone Crow, the half-breed had long known all about old Chep-lahgan the war eagle, and coveted him. For Lone Crow was a trapping Indian who roamed forest and mountain, slaying the wild and selling their pelts to buyers who journeyed far from the settlements. Occasionally, Lone Crow would take some bird or animal alive. These he sold, to be

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taken to some city, where they would be exhibited to wondering crowds.

One day old Chep-lahgan the eagle fished along the shores of the lake. His great, hulking figure looked strangely awkward as he balanced himself clumsily upon the pebbly beach, his sharp eyes searching the shallows for craw-fish. He shook his silvery hackles defiantly, as alone he wandered, care-free and unheeding, for he was a match for most of the wild kindred and did not fear them. Thus it happened that Lone Crow the trapper, hidden in a thicket of tall reeds nearby, heard a terrific thrashing of great wings, and when he reached his concealed trap his quick eye saw with delight that it held a long coveted prize—the great war eagle was caught at last, held by one yellow leg in the trap.

Lone Crow managed to capture him, and then, secretly, he took the eagle to a rough, boarded shanty hidden in the deep woods. The trapper knew well enough that he could dispose of the eagle, for such a magnificent specimen was he that traders would pay a good sum for him.

Now, for many reasons, Little Beaver had never told of his adventure upon Loon Crag, but well enough he knew that had it not been for the timely interference of the great war eagle, he would certainly have lost his life. Kena-beek the serpent

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would have struck him, and far away on the lonely mountain, away from the healing herbs which the Indians use for snake-bite, he would have perished. Besides, he now knew that he had escaped a double peril, for beneath the crag which he had started to climb, he learned there lived a large den of serpents.

Surely, one good turn deserves another. He now doubly admired old Chep-laghan the war eagle and was his friend forever. Daily he would peer up at Loon Crag to watch for his friend as he flew off above the pointed spruces. But at last Little Beaver missed him, and then it was told that Lone Crow, the trapping Indian, had captured the great war bird, and had concealed him somewhere until men came from the settlements to carry him away.

What a fate for a war eagle! Such a mighty ruler, who rightly deserved the freedom of the air! Then did the indignant blood mount in the head of Little Beaver, and his fists clenched tightly, as he determined, somehow, to give Chep-laghan his friend freedom. But how?

He intended to manage it all himself, for should he tell any other boys of the village, perhaps they would speak of it, and should Lone Crow ever discover that he had freed the eagle, or meddled with his affairs, then would he surely seek to revenge himself upon the tribe of Little Beaver, for Lone Crow's ways were evil.

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Every day Little Beaver now went off alone to the forest, hunting for the secret prison of his friend, the eagle. One day, when he had almost despaired of finding the hiding-place, he accidentally stumbled upon the rough, boarded shack of Lone Crow the trapper. This shack the half-breed seldom visited, even to feed his prisoner, for his traps were many and widely scattered.

Lonely was the prison of proud old Chep-lahgan the war eagle. It was very dark there, as Little Beaver, his friend, crawled inside. But there upon a pile of skins he found his friend. One beautiful, wide wing seemed helpless, while his foot was lamed. When Little Beaver tried to examine his hurt foot, the eagle defended himself fiercely, not understanding that a friend had come to him. Then Little Beaver, protecting his hands with skins, bathed the wounds of the eagle, and later, from a nearby stream he caught fish, and watched his friend as he eagerly tore the food and ate.

Beautiful beyond belief was Chep-lahgan, thought Little Beaver, watching him as he rustled his great wings impatiently. Like the wind which seeps and rustles through the corn blades it sounded; silken rustlings. Fierce and full of fire were his round, golden eyes, which blazed forth in the dim shack. Shaking his hackles and flattening his crested head, the eagle snapped at his friend crossly, but Little

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Beaver laughed at him, longing to stroke the beautiful silvery feathers upon his neck.

Little Beaver was very gentle, and no coward. He understood his friend, for he had handled many wild, wounded things. Each day he visited the eagle, bringing healing medicines to cure his wounds; talking softly to his friend as he carefully handled his leg and wing.

“Ugh, I bring good medicine. Hush, do not cry or snap your beak. See, I am your friend; soon you shall be free. What I do is good. We will fool Lone Crow—you shall soon return to your wild brood. Not for the mighty war eagle is a prison! Wait, you shall soon have the wide freedom of the air again. My friend, did you not save me from the sting of Kena-beek the serpent? An Indian boy never forgets!” Thus spoke Little Beaver.

Before another moon the great eagle was almost well. One morning, very early, when Little Beaver reached the shack, he heard the sound of a great commotion inside. The eagle was trying its wings!

Then, almost before Little Beaver could push aside the stout slabs which covered the opening of the shack, there came a rushing, hissing sound, as of many corn blades in the wind; then a smother of great wings over his head and shoulders, shutting out the light, and the huge war eagle hovered above Little Beaver for an instant, as if to say farewell.

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Getting his bearings, he then launched himself into space, and went soaring proudly away. The great eagle was free!

Little Beaver watched him, as far above the pines he soared, and then took a straight line for Loon Crag. Thus did Chep-lahgan the war eagle return to his kindred. Fortunately for Little Beaver, the trapper did not discover the trail which his mocassins had worn to the hidden shack. No, Lone Crow always believed that Malsun the wolf had stolen the eagle from him. And Little Beaver never told his secret.

CHAPTER XXVII

WHY THE PORCUPINE NO LONGER SHOOTS ITS QUILLS

LITTLE BEAVER was happy when he and the old chief discovered a wild, sweet apple tree clinging to the side of the mountain trail. He found a few scattered quills beneath the tree left there by Unk-wunk the porcupine, who must have been there before them. Little Beaver was glad to find the quills. He would take them to his grandmother who would stain them crimson, yellow, and purple with dyes from bark and berries. Then she would cunningly weave the dyed quills into wonderful patterns to decorate his moccasins.

“Ha,” chuckled the old chief, pointing to the quills. “Unk-wunk has been here before us, feasting upon apples. Again has he cunningly beaten his less thrifty neighbors, but he never forgets to leave behind him a few of his quills for our tribes. His winter stores are now all gathered. Not one apple has he left upon the tree for Dee-dee-askh the blue jay, who likes to find a chance frozen apple when it is cold and food hard to find. Unk-wunk has been selfish this time.

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“He can use his wits in spite of his dull looks. But he was not always so wise. Mark how he has left his quills for us. Those are left for the Indians, and it was part of the bargain which Unk-wunk made with the seer a long time ago.”

Then, while Little Beaver tied his quills together with tough sweet grass, the chief began his story.

Once, long ago, Unk-wunk the porcupine was about the most stupid animal who roamed through the forest. He was contented to just grub and grunt his way along the trails, taking whatever food came in his way and was easiest to get. Unk-wunk feared nothing then, for he was well protected. He then possessed the strange power of shooting forth his sharp quills straight at anything which got in his way. Without moving from his tracks, Unk-wunk would send forth a shower of his awful stinging arrows, and the one who got them crept off to die.

These quilly arrows could penetrate the thickest fur pelt, and once they entered the flesh beneath, like barbed, red-hot iron points, they would work their way deep inside, seeking some vital part. Even now the dogs of the lodges go far around the trail over which Unk-wunk has traveled, to avoid him.

It was a glorious day for Unk-wunk when he found his first tree of sweet apples, which he had never before tasted. After the first taste of the

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hard, honey-sweet fruit, he could hardly find enough to satisfy his hunger and longing for them. This great greediness for apples was finally the means of taking away from the porcupine his power to shoot forth his quills. This power he no longer has, in spite of idle tales which you may chance to hear to the contrary. Believe them not.

Unk-wunk had led such a lazy, shiftless kind of life that it so happened he had never before gone out of his road to look for fine fare as did his wild brethren of the woods. He had never known the delight of crunching wild sweet apples. But his neighbors, the woodchucks and the raccoons, were not so ignorant and lazy; often they would journey many miles in a night to seek for apples.

They knew of a wonderful tree which grew upon a distant hillside. It was laden each season with fine fruit, and it was always a race between woodchucks and raccoons to see which should get to the tree first. This was the very tree which Unk-wunk the porcupine chanced to run across.

After Unk-wunk found the sweet apples you may be sure he wore long deep trails from his home to the tree. But in spite of his industry, as soon as the shadows began to lengthen, he could hear the raccoons' rallying cry, calling their tribes to join them. And so before dawn, if they had good luck, they would strip the apple tree, leaving behind

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refuse and cores, so that when Unk-wunk or the woodchucks came the next morning, they were sure to be too late, for having carefully gathered and stored all the apples, the thrifty raccoons were now fast asleep in their hollow tree nests.

At first, when Unk-wunk found the tree, he was so greedy that he decided not to leave the spot. What a great feast he had that day! He munched and crunched until his quilly sides bulged and his eyes fairly goggled. When anything ventured near to share his feast, Unk-wunk would turn savagely upon it, shooting a perfect shower of stinging quills, so that he had the ground all to himself.

Now all this feasting was pleasant for Unk-wunk, but he longed to gather a great hoard of apples in his burrow, that he might have something laid by for winter when old Péboam came, and the frost should nip his tender snout every time he poked it forth from his lodge. Thinking about this, Unk-wunk at last began to work harder than he had ever worked in all his dull life. Industriously he would gather two apples in his mouth—sometimes three if they were small—and these he would carry home. But the trail was long, and even by hard work he could carry only a few. Then his neighbors would get ahead of him usually, and before he knew it, all the apples were gone.

Now a certain wise seer of our tribe, said to be

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possessed of strange powers, had watched Unk-wunk as he laboriously gathered his few apples for winter, and because the porcupine was slow and dull-witted the seer took pity upon him. There was another reason for befriending Unk-wunk; the Indians were dependent upon him for his quills for war bonnets and wampum belts. So the seer determined to help the porcupine gather his apples and get ahead of his more clever neighbors.

Chancing to meet Unk-wunk in the forest, the seer showed him a fine apple tree which grew upon a distant hillside. That night, when the moon came climbing up big and yellow over the pine tops, the porcupine came to the apple tree, getting ahead of Mooweesuk and all his wood kindred.

When Unk-wunk reached the wonderful tree all laden with sweet, mellow apples which showed plainly in the moonlight, instead of picking up two or three in his mouth and carrying them home as he always had done, he did a very strange thing. Raising every quill upon his body, both long and short quills, until he looked exactly like a round chestnut burr, very slowly, taking his time, Unk-wunk laid himself down right where the apples lay thickest, and by rolling over and over among them he soon had an apple sticking upon every quill of his body.

Then grunting happily, "unk-wunk, wunk-wunk," all to himself, the heavily laden porcupine went home

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slowly with his great load of sweet apples. He met others upon the trails, bound for the tree, but the very instant they caught a glimpse of the strange looking object which Unk-wunk made, they stopped for but one fleeting glance, then, with humped up backs upon which their fur rose in terror, they got out of his way as fast as they could travel.

Now there was one great trouble which the seer had to overcome before the porcupine could carry apples upon his quills, because the quills of Unk-wunk were then set loosely. They would never hold an apple until they had been tightened. Accordingly, in some mysterious manner known only to seers, the porcupine's quills were set tight so that he no longer could shoot them forth like arrows, at will.

Many journeys did patient Unk-wunk make, over the apple tree trail that first night, until he had worn a wide path through the forest over which he passed with his heavy loads. By great industry, before sunrise he had managed to gather every apple from that tree and had stored them frugally in his burrow.

When his labors were over and the apples all stored, then did Unk-wunk's dull eyes sparkle with joy, as, rattling his tired quills softly, he laid them flat to rest. He then polished his small black feet, his furry blunt snout, and ears; and grunting softly

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to himself—"unk-wunk, unk-wunk," he went to sleep, well satisfied with his night's work.

Now the porcupine has ever since that time showed his gratefulness to the kind seer who taught him how to gather and store his winter supply of apples. So just to show his appreciation, never does the porcupine visit an apple tree now without pulling out a few of his best quills and scattering them in plain sight, leaving them there for the Indians to find, that they may gather them to weave into fine wampum belts, and trim their war bonnets and leggins with dyed quills; for this was a part of the bargain which the seer made with the porcupine.

But heed not the idle tales of squaws and gossips which you will often hear around the camp fires of strange lodges; that Unk-wunk the porcupine is able, even now, to shoot forth his arrowy quills at will. Nay, believe not such tales, for Unk-wunk no longer possesses that power. He sacrificed it willingly, long ago, all on account of sweet apples.

CHAPTER XXVIII

HOW MOWEEN AND LITTLE BEAR ESCAPED

LONE CROW, the half-breed Indian, was full of craft and cunning. Well acquainted was he with the ways of all things of the forest which wore either fur or feathers. Throughout the North Country he set many snares, for the half-breed sold his pelts each year to traders.

One day Lone Crow laughed when he came across the broad track of Moween the black bear, in the edge of the marshes. He saw where she had stopped to feed upon trillium, or wake-robin roots. Deftly did he then set a trap in the hollow, pulling ferns over it to hide it, and last of all, knowing Moween had a sweet tooth, he laid upon the ferns a lump of old sugar, made from the sweet waters of the maple.

Moween and her cub, Little Bear, found the tempting bait on a certain moonlight night, and the cub never forgot the sight of his mother as she thrashed the underbrush, howling wildly, trying to rid her foot of the trap whose awful teeth clutched her paw hotly, while her angry growls caused the cub's fur to rise upon his back in fear.

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Of course Lone Crow found her, and taking her alive, as he planned, he waited, biding his time, hoping to capture the cub also. Curiosity so overcame Little Bear, that the half-breed had not long to wait, and soon the two captive bears were sold to a man who proposed to train them. Then, as performing bears he would take them to far-off settlements.

The man who owned the bears christened them, and Moween the mother was called Judy, while the cub was named Tip. Now Tip was perhaps the most comical black bear cub that you ever saw. Always good-natured and full of mischief was he, and so was easily trained by his master.

Just at first he was somewhat obstinate, because he could not quite understand what was wanted of him, and refused to climb the tall pole when ordered to do so. But soon he learned about the sharp iron spike which often prodded him cruelly when he was contrary. So, to escape the prods, he would quickly climb the pole of his own accord.

Down from the far North Country traveled Moween and Little Bear, now Tip and Judy, leaving behind them their beautiful country, the safe whispering shelter of the pine forests, and their den among the ledges. On and on over hot dusty roads they shuffled, dragged by long stout chains. Sometimes they were hungry, but they soon learned that the children were their best friends. Little Tip

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learned to turn a somersault, and this he soon found out would often bring him nuts or dainties from the delighted children.

But poor old Moween, or Judy, his mother, was less fortunate. Her coat soon became shabby and faded, and often she was beaten and ill-fed. This so affected her nature that she became very cross, and once she even bit her master, at whom she would growl savagely and show her teeth in a snarl whenever he came too near her. But with Tip she never lost patience, for was he not her cub? So poor old Judy often went without food herself, that the cub might be well fed.

The two bears never forgot the first long winter when, as captives, they were penned in box-like cages where Judy could hardly stand upright without bumping her head. Then, the only exercise which the bears had was when they were brought out for their training. Their master would scold them when they failed to understand, and strap them sharply across their tender snouts if they failed to do a certain trick. Both bears longed for life on the dusty roads rather than this, for sometimes they slept in delicious woodsy places.

Often, dreaming of his loved northern forest, Tip would grieve and whimper fretfully, like a child, longing again for the old free life of the forest, where he had crossed dim trails, hunting chipmunks,

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stealing their caches of nuts while they chir-r-r'd angrily at him, or digging out fat white grubs or spicy sprouting things beneath the leaf mold, while high overhead the tall pines whispered and swished mysteriously.

It was autumn now—the Time of the Painted Leaves—and the highways over which they were passing were bordered with wild grapes and blood-red clusters of trailing puckery cherries, while the hanging blackberries tempted the two bears almost to frenzy. In vain they tugged and tried to pull away to reach the luscious berries, which any bear will travel miles to feast upon. It was no use; they were captives. And then old Judy became very cross indeed, but she was only beaten and prodded still harder by her master for trying to pull away.

One night, just outside a settlement, the master and his boy slept beneath a haystack, and, as usual, fastened the bears securely not very far away. Poor old Judy, worn out by shuffling over miles of hot, dusty road, soon fell asleep. But the night was full of wonders for Tip, for he longingly watched the little flitting firefly lamps off in the thickets, and heard Wawonaissa the whip-poor-will calling softly back and forth across the dim meadows. Owls, on swift wings flitted softly past his furry ears. Suddenly a great bat dashed itself straight into his very eyes.

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This made the cub mad, and he jerked his head impatiently aside. As he did so, a little clinking, metallic sound was heard. Then Tip saw that his chain had parted from his collar—a weak link had given way, and Little Bear was free! Warily he crept around the tree, padding very softly to where his mother snored. But she was far too weary to heed him, and growled crossly when her cub's paw gently cuffed at her scarred ears, as he tried to rouse her. Then the cub, having tried his best to make her go along with him, scuttled swiftly off between the shadowy hayricks, making for the shelter of the distant woods as fast as he could travel.

Before day dawned the cub managed to put many miles between his tormentors and himself. At daylight he reached a mountain which he climbed, halting to feast upon luscious berries, which he scooped off with his flat paws in handfuls, whimpering little sing-song whines of great joy as he gorged himself.

Sundown came, and the cub found himself over the mountain. Down in a pasture he found pink, button mushrooms. Such a feast as he had! He did not stop to heed the bellows of frightened cows, who, at sight of a bear, huddled together in a corner of the pasture. Suddenly the cub spied a boy, who was coming to take his cows home, and then the cub became interested, for children had always been friendly to him on the road. Tip remembered this,

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and the nuts which they fed him. So, hopefully thinking the boy had something for him, the cub started towards him on an eager, shuffling run, while the boy, too terrified to run, at sight of a bear close at hand, stood stockstill, his eyes bulging with fright.

The cub, still thinking to win the boy, commenced to do all his best tricks, ending by a quick somersault. Still no nuts did the boy offer, and poor puzzled Tip made for a tall sapling near the boy. He intended to climb the pole—one of his best tricks. But the instant the bear started for the sapling on an eager run, the boy, now *sure* that the bear was after him, gave a howl of terror and ran off into the woods, leaving the cows to their fate. So the cub, having won nothing from the boy, went back to his mushrooms.

Of course they hunted for the cub, but they never found him; he was far too clever for them. As for poor old Judy, she became crosser than ever and got far more kicks and proddings than before. One night, however, when the old mother bear was feeling very lonely, and missing her cub sadly, the boy fastened her securely, as he thought, to a stout sapling for the night. Poor mother bear! How she missed the cub's soft woolly back against her side, for her coat was thin and worn, and the nights were cold and frosty. She raised her scarred snout, whining softly as she peered off into the night shadows with

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her little, dull eyes, hoping that the cub might come to her perhaps.

But in vain. He never came, watch as she might. In sudden desperation Moween began to tug and jerk her chain. Next she examined with interest the sapling to which they had tied her. Finally, she began to gnaw and bite at it, and before the moon rose, poor old mistreated Moween was free! She shuffled off into the shadows of the night, carefully keeping off the dusty roads, that she might not leave behind her broad tracks and enable them to find her trail. Through woods and over mountains she journeyed, feeding happily and resting by the way, always hiding herself when she saw men. Thus she took the long trail back towards the north woods.

Soon the nights began to grow still sharper and more frosty. Moween knew she was going all the time farther northwards, and she was glad. Her shabby coat commenced to grow out, filling in the scarred spots with fine new hair, so that the marks of cruelty no longer showed upon her. Now, instead of snarling crossly at anything which came across her path, Moween whined to herself, which was her bearish way of showing her happiness. Almost forgotten was the silly, meaningless song which her master had always sung to make her dance—"Lil-lil, lil, lil, lil," he had sung tirelessly as she capered clumsily. Now old Moween heard only the beauti-

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ful carols of bluebirds at dawn, and the lullaby of the thrush and whip-poor-wills at twilight.

One morning the thick hoarfrost lay over everything, and Moween, cooling her snout in an ice-filmed pool, her little eyes always watchful, discovered a wide, flat track which she knew well enough had not been made by either Pekompf the wildcat or Malsun the wolf. It was a *bear's track*, and having sniffed it, Moween started off on a swift, shambling run, grunting eager "woof, woof's," as she ran. Entering a sheltered clearing, she suddenly spied a familiar, round figure—the cub. He was clawing out his breakfast of grubs from beneath a log.

"Chink, chink, chink," rattled the piece of chain which still dragged from the mother bear's collar as she ran. The cub raised his round, furry ears. He had caught the familiar clink of the chain. Next instant his fine breakfast was quite forgotten as he bounded towards Moween. With rumbling growls they greeted each other; next, Moween cuffed the cub's furry ears well, but good-naturedly, and the cub nuzzled his mother, thinking her much improved with her beautiful new coat.

Then Moween and the cub wandered off into the deep woods together. In time, the mother bear's good nature returned, and they got rid of the last remaining link of the hateful chain and collar. They were captives no longer.

CHAPTER XXIX

MOWEEN, THE CUB, AND THE WHITE TERRORS

FAR below the ledge where Moween and the cub slept, lay Tamarack Swamp. The brook which they could see from above, running like a silver ribbon through the green swamp, was noisy until it reached the marshes; then it became quiet. Silently it slipped beneath moss-cushioned logs, looking black and mysterious.

Down in the deep water holes lived great fish; Kenozha the pickerel, and Skootum the trout—he of the painted sides, and many others, which Moween and the cub knew about, so that for them the swamp became a favorite hunting ground. No longer captives, they took up their old, wild life, and had now almost forgotten the hateful time when they were forced to dance and amuse the people of the settlements.

Moween loved the stillness of the great wild swamp, where man seldom came to spy upon them, and they were safely hidden. Ambling slowly down from the ledges, she picked her way carefully over the snaky roots of the swamp, her little keen eyes

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searching crevices and bark for beetles or ants. She was bound for a certain great pine tree, long dead, which she had marked for her own. Upon reaching it she began to lick up eagerly the swarming ants from its mossy sides, often cuffing it with her flat paw, to make them pour out still faster, and all the while she whined softly to herself; a sing-song of contentment. Never had poor old Moween felt so care-free and well-fed.

Meantime, the cub was not very far away. Usually he found and followed Moween's trail, never giving up until they were together.

The cub was coming across the swamp, testing each quaking bog carefully to find the firmer places and avoiding the dangerous quagmires. He was now a good-sized bear, with thick, glossy coat. He was fine and fat with autumn feeding, and almost as broad as he was long. He had just enjoyed a wonderful feast of little sweet brown chinquapins, finishing with a quantity of sweet wild grapes. The sticky, honey-like juice still smeared his furry ears and snout, while his paws were painted red with crushed grapes, so eagerly had he torn them from the vines.

He came to the brook, waddling leisurely over to a deep, still pool. Squatting upon a great bunch of tangled roots overhanging the water, the cub idly watched the great fish, as they slowly swam across the sunlit shadows, deep in the pool. Kenozha, a

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crafty old pickerel with a long snout, glanced impudently at the cub, with his cold, goggly eyes. Then the cub moved a little nearer to the water and dangled one claw-tipped paw carelessly over into it, ready for a quick catch, in case the pickerel should rise.

Slowly, very slowly, waved the painted fins of Skootum the trout; then did Pah-pak-kee-na the grasshopper commence to sing a very drowsy song, close to the round, furry ears of the cub, while the brown dancing bugs on the top of the water wove back and forth, until the cub, watching them, began to grow strangely sleepy. His head sank low; he began to nod and nod, like an old man, until suddenly he lost his balance.

With a loud splash and a surprised "waugh, waugh," the cub wallowed in the depths of the water hole. He enjoyed the wetting after the first plunge, and crawled out shaking himself, casting his eyes about to see if Moween had been watching him. Still feeling sleepy the cub decided to climb into a giant tamarack tree and rest. Selecting one having wide, flat limbs he pulled himself up among the plummy branches, and spreading his fat body upon his back, his paws over his head, like a papoose that is weary, the cub fell asleep, snoring loudly.

Meantime, Moween the wise one had seen the cub's accident, and laughed to herself. She knew well

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enough when he climbed into the tree, and now, as she came to the brook to hunt crawfish, she saw the cub and heard his snores.

Now the cub was usually careful in choosing a sleeping place, but for once, being overcome with slumber, he had not taken the trouble to glance over his head. Had he done so, he would never have taken that particular tree for his rest. For right above where he lay, hidden well by a plume-like spray of tamarack, hung a gray ball. As wide as a war shield was this ball, while from the bottom of it poured continually a stream of deadly black-and-white hornets—the venomous kind—with painted white war bands upon their bodies, and a sting which is worse than that of a poisoned arrow, or the bite of the rattling serpent when he is on the war path.

Bears can stand the sting of the bee best of all the wild things, for their coats are thick, and never do they hesitate to enter a wild bee tree when on a hunt for honey. But when the bear is asleep, with his soft snout unprotected, right below a great nest of the white-painted terrors of the forest—that is quite different.

Meantime, the cub slept on, snoring loudly, occasionally waving his flat paws impatiently to and fro to scare off the gnats which tickled his ears and nose. Finally he waved his paw too violently; he had at-

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tracted one of the hornets. Buzzing inquisitively, one flew close to his head, then, attracted still more by the sweet grape juice, which, in spite of his wetting, still clung to the cub's furry face, it ventured nearer.

Sleepily the cub hit the painted one with his paw as it lighted upon his tender snout. Off it flew for a second, to return, bringing with it other white-painted ones. Then, before the cub was fairly awake, the warrior hornets swarmed all about him. With high, thin cries they flew about his ears and eyes, making for his soft snout, where they settled, sending their poisoned arrows stinging into his flesh, clinging there until the cub howled with pain and terror.

Then down below came the sound of a mighty rushing, which shook the great tamarack tree to the tips of its branches. It was Moween herself, who had heard the agonized cries of the cub, and instantly was clawing her way up to him, her little red eyes fiery with the gleam of hate; her teeth bared, snapping with rage, as she climbed to him. Moween soon spied the hornets, then, nosing and cuffing the cub to get out of her way, to show him she alone would battle with his enemies—she set upon them. The cub whined helplessly, digging his paws into his eyes, but Moween again turned savagely upon him, and he scrambled hastily down from the

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tree and hurried to bury his burning snout in the soft, healing mud of the swamp.

Well enough Moween the wise one knew about the painted terrors, and how to handle them. First, as soon as she saw their gray lodge, the round ball overhead, she tried to reach it, but in vain; it was too high up. Then did Moween break off the largest limb within her reach, and standing upon her hind legs, she thrashed savagely at the gray ball until it fell to the ground. Then climbing quickly down herself, she idly watched the hornets nest for awhile. They seemed to know what had caused their sudden ruin, for after Moween's first attack, warily they stayed inside their lodge.

They were waiting for her to come closer, that they might rush out upon her in a great mass, for the crafty, painted hornet is very wise.

Still, unless they managed to get into her nostrils or ears, Moween did not fear them, for even when a hornet had bitten clear through to her flesh, she seemed to feel only a tiny lump there, not larger than that made by the bite of Suggé-ma, the little singing mosquito. So Moween did not fear the white-painted ones; she only wished to punish them now for stinging the cub.

As Moween squatted, watching curiously the great gray ball, the painted ones began to grow impatient and stir about. Then Moween, shutting her eyes

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bravely, met them as they buzzed angrily about her, boxing at them savagely with her great paws. And just to teach them a lesson, and to show her utter contempt for them, she shuffled over to the nest, and picking it up tucked it beneath her arm, like a papoose. Glancing warily about first, to see where the cub had gone and to make sure he was safe, Moween dropped the nest upon the ground, and laying her great hulking body down, she began to roll herself back and forth over the nest, crushing every hornet inside, and breaking up their gray lodge forever. Thus bravely did the mother bear destroy her enemy, the white-painted terrors of the swamp, while the cub wallowed happily in the cooling marsh mud.

CHAPTER XXX

HOW MOWEEN ROBBED LITTLE BEAVER

BENEATH a deep ledge over-looking the valley, Moween and the cub had slept all winter. Below their den stretched wide the swamps. Here, in spring-time were crawfish, fresh-water clams, and clumps of green skunk-cabbage which the bears clambered down from their ledges to feed upon, as soon as Péboam, god of winter had ceased shaking his snow feathers over the Northland. For after being shut in the den for many long moons, always a bear is very hungry.

One fine day Moween poked her snout from the den, sniffing the keen, frosty air with joy. Blue was the sky. "Konk-a-lee, Konk-a-lee," whistled the black-bird, he of the red wing. "Pou-quer-ee," called Owaissa the bluebird, clearly. "Honk, honk, honk-honk," came the cry of the black geese high above her. Spring had come, and Moween was glad. Back in the den still slept the cub, but so hungry was Moween that she did not wait for him to wake up, but began to slide and scramble eagerly down the cliffs, bound for the marshes.

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Moween had not gone very far, however, when she suddenly began to realize that something was quite wrong with the old familiar landmarks down in the valley. Where now was the blasted pine, the watch-tower of Koos-koos-koos the owl, which had stood in the very center of tamarack swamp? Gone. And then, as Moween gazed with astonished eyes, she saw plainly that the young willows had not even sprouted, and not a single cabbage tip had poked its sharp point from the marsh.

Then did Moween, whose sides were so thin that her worn fur pelt hung in folds about her gaunt frame, begin to feel very anxious. But still, being wise and filled with courage, she did not despair. She made for the well-known forest trails, where she hoped to find game, but when she reached the familiar woods what a sight met her eyes! The giant spruces had been blackened and burned to their very tops, while beneath her broad feet, the underbrush broke and crumbled into charred coals as she passed over it.

Searching everywhere for some green thing, at last her anxious eyes discovered a pine tree, to one side of which still clung green moss. That tree trunk looked promising, amid all the awful blackness. Moween's quick eye had seen ants running in and out among the mossy crevices. Standing upon her hind legs, she struck blow after blow upon

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the tree, and out poured a perfect stream of frightened ants. Thus did Moween break her long fast. So keenly did Moween enjoy her feast that she growled low to herself, as she eagerly lapped up the ants with her red tongue.

Then did Má-ma the woodpecker stick out his frowsy head from above to listen to the strange sounds which Moween made, while Kagh the hedgehog halted, grunting inquisitively, "Unk-wunk, wunk-wunk,"—jealous because Moween was having such a fine feast, and he was still hungry.

"Ke-oo, ke-oo," screamed Haw-a-hak overhead, and two red-tailed hawks hurled past Moween. They were having a battle in the air, over a rabbit which the largest hawk had seized and was carrying off. Now the hawks had not seen the bear, for they were too excited over their prey to notice her. Then did the little red eyes of Moween, who watched them, grow very anxious—she hoped that Haw-a-hak, the big hawk, would drop the rabbit. Sure enough, as the hawks battled, down fell their prey, and Moween quickly pounced upon it. But the hawk was big and fierce, and he did not mean to lose his supper.

"Ke-oo, Ke-oo," screamed the great hawk angrily, as flapping low, its great, powerful wings wide spread, it landed right upon the head of the bear. Like a thunderbolt the hawk landed, and with a

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baffled howl of rage and pain Moween dropped her prey. Then, before she could gather her wits, again the hawk had the rabbit, and was soon soaring off towards the ledges, flinging back to Moween a scream of triumph as he flew.

Angry, baffled, and almost sick with hunger was the bear by this time, for she had actually held the rabbit in her jaws, tasting its blood, which served but to whet her appetite. In utter despair Moween squatted down upon her haunches, and digging her great paws into her eyes, she whimpered, mourning like a sick papoose over her lost supper. Still, she did not give up, and finally came across two squirrel caches, but they were only partially filled with rancid, mildewed nuts. This was poor fare. Still, crunching the moldy nuts unhappily, Moween came at last upon the sluggish swamp water, gleaming among the blackened bogs. Then did she make up her mind at once what she would do; she would fish for her supper.

Eagerly she shambled over the bogs, breathing loudly as she went. Near a deep, promising pool she halted. Then, softly and warily she set her great flat feet, until she reached the center of the pool, and a great flat stone. Down she crouched, and dropping one great brown paw into the water, Moween began to wave it gently back and forth—she was trying to make an eddy, hoping to draw within

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its circle a big pickerel which she had seen lurking in the brown water of the pool.

But alas! this particular fish was old and wise. With his goggle eyes he watched the great waving paw awhile; then, with a whisk of his tail he swam down stream. By this time poor starved Moween was almost in despair. However, she *did* manage to have a fine fish supper that night, and in a most strange fashion did she catch it.

There were others beside the wild kindred who knew where Skootum the painted one, and also Maskenozah the great pike, loved to hide. Here at twilight, the wary fish rise best, for then comes the fitting white moth skimming over the water. Then the smooth waters of the little lakes break into ripples, as Skootum leaps high to snap a gnat on the wing. Little Beaver and the boys of the village knew all about this, and already they had fished so well that they had more than they could carry. Back in the thicket they had left many willow wythes strung with fish, while eager to catch more, they wandered farther along shore.

Through the darkening shadows wandered hungry Moween, and all at once she saw the boys at their fishing. Instantly she halted, her little red eyes full of surprised interest. Suddenly she turned about, drawing deep breaths as she hastened her pace, but taking care all the time not to show herself, always

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keeping well in the shadows. Moween had scented the fish which the boys had left behind them.

Then upon the stillness Little Beaver and his companions heard a bear's short, sharp snuffles of joy, and peering behind them, in the darkness they saw a great, black, hulking mass from out of which gleamed two twinkling sparks like Wah-wah-tay-see the firefly. Then came a sound of mighty crashing, as Moween broke into a quick, shuffling run. Carrying in her mouth all the fish she could hold she made for the ledges; she had broken her long fast.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW THE CUB RODE DOWN THE MOUNTAIN

INSIDE the den of Moween all appeared quiet, for they slept. But had you listened you might have heard a deep intake of breath from a bundle of fur huddled in a dim corner of the cave. It was the cub. Next he softly scraped his claws, stretched forth his cramped feet, sat up, and rubbing his eyes with his furry, flat paws, peered anxiously into a far corner where lay the huge form of Moween, his mother.

Moween raised her head as the cub whimpered softly, and in the darkness he caught the yellow gleam of her two glow-worm eyes. Then he was glad; it was far less lonely. Soon the two bears were outside in the cold spring sunshine. They had taken a long nap and were very hungry. Besides, at certain seasons the bears long for the wild nettle, or other green forage, and they started forth to hunt for it.

Although snow still lay deep in the passes, already beneath its surface green things had sprouted, and shambling off to the marshes they were soon scrap-

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ing away old snow to search for certain purple sprouts which poked through the frozen marsh mud.

Moween's eyes were old and somewhat dim, while her usually keen scent was not so good as when she was younger. Else she must surely have caught the man scent along the swampy trails, where already Lone Crow had set his traps. But Moween did not see them, and the cub, having caught and eaten a mouse, was anxiously watching the trail of Musquash the old muskrat.

Suddenly the cub heard a growl of agony from Moween, and a loud crashing among the underbrush. Tearing over the bogs and frozen places, he soon reached her, and found her struggling to rid her paw of a trap. Fortunately, the trap was not a large one, still, it gripped her foot tightly, and try as she would, she could not shake it off. So back to the home ledge on the mountain-side traveled the two bears, poor Moween still dragging the hateful trap and long chain, which jingled against the stones as she ran. This reminded them both of the time when they were captives and had been dragged about by the same kind of chain.

Together Moween and the cub worked hard to get rid of the trap and finally, after many days, her foot was free. But her paw was so very sore she could not use it, or travel well, so that the cub had to work doubly hard to provide food for himself

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and Moween. Always, the wild things are kind to their wounded mates, and the cub was loyal to Moween. Often he went to sleep hungry, until at last Moween's foot healed, and once more they took the trails together. But the trap taught them a lesson, and they now were careful not to cross the man trail, lest they find traps, or lest men—perhaps their old masters—should again make them captives, and beat them.

Came the season Muk-kuks, the maple sugar time, when the nights were cold and frosty, and then came the strong spring sunshine, which made the sap mount and flow in the maples, and the red buds to sprout in the swamps. Then, all day, on the sunny side of the maple trees did Má-ma the woodpecker—he who drinks the white sweet waters of the maple—sound his loud “tap, tap, tap” upon the tree trunks, drilling round holes to make the sweet sap run. Down it poured in streams upon the gray trunks, and often Moween and the cub might be seen raised upon their hind legs to lap up the sweet sap as it poured forth, fighting off the swarming ants, and cuffing aside the honey bees who also came to feast.

Maple sugar neither of the bears had actually tasted, as yet, but both would travel many suns to reach a bee tree stored with honey. Moween remembered well a certain wonderful tree which she

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had once found, where for one long night she had feasted upon honey. Always now, remembering that tree, her little watchful eyes followed with interest the flight of a bee, and her nostrils would quiver with longing whenever she caught the arid scent of wild honey combs.

The thaw had come—a wonderful time to boil sap, and in the lonely clearings the two bears frequently saw blue lines of smoke rising from the thick maple forests. This was the sugar bush, and settlers had come there to tap the maples, setting up their rude camps and boiling down the sap into sugar, which they would trade for supplies. Already faint whiffs of the sweet, boiling syrup were wafted through the forest.

One day Moween and the cub wandered far. In the first place Moween, longing for sweets, had trailed a wandering bee far over the mountain. Of course Little Bear followed her. Then, suddenly, Moween caught a new, delicious odor, which came straight from the sugar bush. Moween lost no time in getting to the camp, which, when they approached it, appeared to be quite deserted, for the sugar makers chanced to be away collecting sap.

In and out of the deserted camp prowled Moween and the cub, sticking their noses into sugary pans, picking up pork rinds and other dainties, always keeping their eyes open for men. But old Moween,

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being more venturesome, poked her nose inside the rude shack of the sugar makers. Smelling the store of maple sugar left there, she dove still further inside, and began to utter little singsong whines of delight as she scented the treat before her. Soon she was crunching great hunks of crumbly sugar, while the cub had discovered, so he imagined, something far more wonderful. Already his head and most of his round body were inside one of the great black iron kettles used for boiling down the sugar.

"Rasp, rasp, rasp," sounded his tongue as it scraped and lapped up the sugary sediment inside the round kettle. Soon his head and ears were coated over with the sticky syrup.

"Woof, woof!" Suddenly Little Bear, his head inside the kettle, heard a quick warning cry from Moween. Danger was at hand! He heard the swift rush of her great padded feet as she tore madly from the shanty—the sugar boilers were coming back to the camp! Moween had caught the man scent; they must get away quickly! Not an instant to lose, warned Moween, making straight for the ice-filmed mountain-side, down which the cub, panic-stricken, tried to follow her.

But alas for Little Bear! Somehow, just at the critical moment, he managed to tangle himself in the iron handle of the kettle as he tried to get his head out, and losing his balance, he dove head first

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deep into the round-bottomed kettle. Frantically he waved his short hind legs, and tried to wriggle out of the kettle, but his movements only started the great iron pot rolling.

Before old Moween was half-way down the steep mountain-side, the great iron kettle, with the cub inside, tore swiftly past her. "Bump, bump," it sounded out sharply, its iron sides hitting every stone and stump as it passed her. And Moween, terrified out of her senses by the appearance of the strange black thing which flew past her, howled with fear, lost her footing, and slid down the icy slope, reaching the bottom about the time Little Bear landed. When she saw the cub roll dizzily from the iron pot, he was such a funny sight, that had Moween been human, she would surely have shouted at his strange, bewildered appearance.

First of all the cub sat up, holding his paws to his head, trying to think out what had happened to him, and where he had landed after his wild ride down the mountain. His head and most of his brown fur coat were coated thickly with sugar drippings, so that he looked like a light yellow bear instead of a brown one.

It was wise old Moween who recovered her wits first; she knew they must not tarry there long, for the men would soon track them. "Woof, woof," she called sharply to the cub, trying to make him

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understand that they must hide themselves quickly, lest their enemies overtake them.

Off they rushed, panic-stricken, nor did they halt again until moonrise. Terrified and hunted, they shambled on together through the wilderness; over mountains, across strange swamps, through dead forests of spiked spruces, whose cruel points tore the fur from their sides, and stuck them like spears. Nor did they halt again for rest until they had reached a certain high, safe ledge, where the man scent never came.

As for the cub, he thought he had not had such a bad time after all, for he had taken away upon his coat enough sugar to keep him lapping quite happily for many hours.

CHAPTER XXXII

WHEN THE BEAVERS WENT TO WAR

LITTLE BEAVER often visited the pleasant shores of Loon Lake. There, concealing himself among the tall rushes, he loved to watch Ahmeek, and his colony at their dam building at the top of the lake.

Best of all did Little Beaver enjoy watching the baby beavers, often longing to make friends with them, as they played alone upon the muddy banks of the lake, while their elders worked. Fat and furry and like round balls were the little beavers as with little squeaks of joy they gamboled together, rolling over each other, waddling comically, dragging their short tails in the soft mud. Little Beaver longed to touch them, but as he slyly crept a little closer, always, some old sentinel beaver would spy him. Then, "slap, slap, slap," he would beat with his tail upon the water, and instantly the little beavers would dive and disappear.

So peaceful and gentle were the beavers, that Little Beaver, named thus for the tribe of the beaver, often marveled at their ways, because most of the wild kindred are fierce and warlike. This so im-

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pressed him that he asked the chief if they were always thus peaceful, and why.

“Wise and industrious are the beavers, and always have been. But no—they were not *always* at peace, for once Ahmeek and his tribe were engaged in a long, terrible war, called ‘The War of the Beavers.’

“On the shores of beautiful Lake Athabaska once lived a mighty race of red men—the Chippewa’s. These Indians loved and protected the beaver, calling him ‘Little Brother,’ encouraging him to build his lodge close to the wigwams of their tribe. These Indians respected the beaver, and believed that the spirit of the beavers entered into their own tribes and were their own lost kindred.

“That was long before the commencement of the great beaver war—ages and ages ago. No northern Indian will ever forget about that war, for it is a legend which has been handed down from generation to generation. That you may have more respect for Ahmeek the beaver, listen to the legend.”

Long ago the beavers were a mighty race, and they ruled over certain tribes of red men, who were actually their slaves. This may seem very strange, but you must know that these particular red men were of low intelligence; idle, indolent and too foolish to hunt for themselves. They even built for

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themselves no lodges, but lived in earth burrows, like the animals. They were always quarreling and fighting among themselves, while the beavers, on the other hand, were wise, industrious, and lovers of peace. As time wore on, however, gradually these dull Indians commenced to gain wisdom. They began to work, to hunt and trap, and learned the wonderful art of curing the pelts of the wild, and to build for themselves skin tepees. At last, they became so civilized that they began to grow discontented because the beavers were so much stronger than they, and ruled over them.

Finally these red men called together a council and agreed to slay the beavers; to drive them far away from the Northland, that they, the Indians, might gain possession of the beautiful lake, which is called Athabaska. For they coveted the choice building places along the shores of the lake, where the industrious beavers had raised their round-roofed lodges.

Thus began the great War of the Beavers, which lasted through many long years. For, in spite of the strength of the Indians, the mighty army of the beavers always won the last battle. And instead of diminishing, the beavers grew more mighty, until at last they took possession of most of that part of the country which their enemies coveted.

Then the Indians knew that to win, they must

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strengthen their own army in some way. So, after holding another mighty council together, they set out on a long journey of many moons, towards the land of the setting sun; far off in the west across the great plains. When they came at last to the wide flat lands, they pitched their tepees and made camp close to a mighty tribe of red men.

These Indians were kinsmen, and friendly, and greeted their brethren with dancing and feasting. When their feasting was ended, gathering in a circle and passing the pipe together, as is the custom of our brave men, the chiefs of the two tribes held a pow-wow, or a great council, which lasted for many suns.

All through the pleasant Moon of Strawberries the wise men counseled there, while the young men and boys, and the maidens of the two tribes feasted and danced together, making merry. Such tales of their beautiful northern country did the visiting braves tell to the red men of the setting sun; how their streams raced madly, as high leaped the giant fish—Mishe-nahma the great sturgeon, whose body was large enough to furnish a feast for a whole tribe, and Skootum, the fish of the painted sides, and others.

Wonderful stories did they tell of Keebuckh, their northern otter, whose fur is soft as the silken head of a papoose, of Malsun the great timber wolf, of

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Pekompf the wildcat and his tribes—whose pelts were to be had in thousands—until, at last, unable to withstand all these fine things, the western Indians pulled up their wigwam poles, and journeyed to the Northland.

But just one thing the visiting tribes did not tell their kinsmen; that they were at war with the beavers, who, by this time had taken full possession of their domains in the Northland. This the western Indians were not long in finding out, but, after journeying so far, these red men, although nearly every choice stream and building site was now occupied by the beavers, determined to settle there.

Nowhere had they found such wonderful game, or seen such giant fish as leaped in these northern waters. Only the hateful beavers were there. So the two tribes of Indians united themselves into a mighty army and went to war against the beavers. For many moons they prepared for this great battle, sharpening their spears and arrows, and painting their naked brown bodies with war paint of many colors; vermilion, yellow and blue, and dressing their coarse hair bravely with eagles' feathers and furry, dangling tails.

Long did they fight against the beavers. All through the beautiful northern forests they drove them, following them to the shores of Lake Athabaska, where they finally conquered the mighty

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beavers. For at last there remained but one solitary old beaver and his mate. This was none other than Ahmeek, the king of all the beavers. 'Tis said none other than the Great Spirit himself protected Ahmeek, and that it was impossible for the red men to slay him.

Mightily had he fought, and he took his last stand upon a great, dome-like lodge on the shores of the lake. All about him pressed the red men, and at last, very badly wounded, hopelessly outnumbered by his foes, brave Ahmeek and his mate finally dove beneath their lodge, and swimming under the water, where the flying arrows could not find them, at last they reached the far side of the lake.

Creeping forth, very wearily, they managed to hide themselves beneath the roots of a giant spruce. There they remained hidden safely until their wounds had healed, and they were quite rested, and by that time the red men had gone away, thinking them all slain.

Now, on the shores of the beautiful Lake Athabaska, which is in the far North Country, to this day there stands a dome-shaped rock. 'Tis all that remains to mark the lodge of the beavers, and is fittingly named "Beaver Lodge." Right across from the spot where Beaver Lodge stands, the clay-like soil is still stained a bright red hue. 'Tis said to be the stains of battle, and for many years have the

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Indians known about this red clay, and many tribes journey to the spot, seeking the red clay, which they use as war paint.

Thus it is that a Chippewa Indian always respects the beaver, for they know his true history. The beaver tribe is few and scattered. But no creature in the animal kingdom is quite so wise as he, for like an experienced woodman can he cleverly fell a tree, making it to fall upon just the spot he wills it to do, and very many other wise things can he do, imitating man.

This is why, when forced to slay a beaver for his pelt, our tribe go through a certain ceremony first. We soberly explain to our brother, the beaver, that we suffer from cold; then we offer to him our humble apologies for injury to him or his tribe. Remember this, for all Indians are kin to the beaver.

Little Beaver was glad to know the legend of the beavers, and at night, lying beneath his skin coverings, he often heard the "saw, saw, saw" of the beavers' teeth, and listened to hear a tree fall in the forest. Then, always, Little Beaver was glad, and he hoped Ahmeek would finish his lodge and strengthen his dam before the Frost Spirit came.

CHAPTER XXXIII

MOOWEESUK THE RACCOON AND HIS PRISONER

OLD MOOWEESUK the raccoon, and his family, lived in a vast pine forest, which bordered the edge of a swamp. One year, in the Moon of Falling Leaves, Mooweesuk and his mate, after holding council, decided to move. They had many good reasons for wishing to do this, because so many of the wild kindred lived in that particular forest, it had been a hard season for them to find enough food to go around.

Formerly, there used to be craw-fish in plenty, and tender fresh water clams in the streams. But nowadays, Shuh-shuh-gah, the heron, and his tribe always managed to reach the pools ahead of the raccoons, gobbling up everything along the shore— young, tender frogs, minnows, and everything good.

Mooweesuk dreaded to leave his old home, but then, he was a kind father, and the three papoose raccoons were always hungry. Round and furry they were, with old, quaint faces; trustingly they followed their elders, wherever they led. As for the mate of Mooweesuk, she was glad when they de-

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cided to move, because, for one thing, she disliked to be crowded, and since the arrival of the small raccoons, sometimes the nest in the tamarack tree was so full that in order to stretch out their cramped bodies, often she and old Mooweesuk were obliged to leave the nest, crawl outside, and cling to some limb, sleeping there all night. Tightly they must cling with their little black feet lest the rough winds which shook the tamarack tear them from their perch.

Usually Mooweesuk and his tribe travel by night. Often you might hear their quavering, whimpering cries, as at sunset they rallied each other to wander and forage.

One evening, when shadows commenced to steal like spirits over the trails far below the tamarack tree, the raccoon family, who had slept all day, woke up, yawning as they stretched out their cramped claws, and opened their round, greenish eyes. Then two big, gray bundles of fur, followed by three smaller bundles, slid and scratched their way down from the tree, and "Indian file," they stole off through the woods.

Very wide was the great swamp, and so Mooweesuk planned to go clear around it, because, by doing so, he might stumble upon just the best place for a new home. Besides, he did not care to settle in the midst of the marsh—no, there were too many

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unfriendly neighbors living there, who might even boldly carry off one of the raccoon babies.

They skirted a pond, leaving behind in the soft mud queer tracks, which looked like the footprints of children. Often they halted, teaching the small raccoons to fish, using their little black fore paws like hands, as they dabbled their food in the water, for which custom the Indians gave them the name of "Little brother of the bear, or Lotor, the washer."

They were having such a pleasant journey, that when the moon came up at last over the tops of the pointed pines, it glinted across their silvery fur as they gamboled and played together, cuffing about, rolling over each other, uttering little joyous squeaks, sending their long, whimpering cries through the dark forest; while all about them from the swamp called Katy-dids, frogs, and the hoot owl family.

As they wandered on and on, soon they began to find food far more plentiful. For many moons they journeyed, growing very fat, but still they had not come to such a fine home as their old tamarack nest had been. And at last, because of their fine feeding along the way, they became so heavy with fat that they could no longer travel fleetly. The raccoons were really putting on their winter's supply of fat, getting ready to hibernate. Already, with hoarse screams of warning, the wild black geese had been

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flying over for many days, "honk, honk, honking," to the southward, away from the biting Frost Spirit.

By this time Mooweesuk and his family had gone clear around to the far side of the great swamp. Here they discovered a new, unfamiliar country, where there were hills, strange new trees, and many winding streams such as they had never before seen. Old Mooweesuk began to wonder if, after all, they would be as content in this new location as they had in their old home forest. For here, in this new place, the trees grew far apart, and the old tamarack grove had been so dark, so well hidden. Besides, what matter if they *were* crowded in the old nest? When blizzards crooned and whined and tore overhead, pleasant it was to sleep snug and tight, for then they were very warm.

By this time old Mooweesuk had almost made up his mind to go back to the tamarack, but just at that time the raccoons came to a group of butternut trees beneath which the nuts lay, while up above, in the tree his eyes saw many, many more. Soon the raccoon family were cracking the strange nuts eagerly with their sharp teeth. Never had they tasted anything so fine before. Hazel-nuts they knew, but these were far, far richer and better. It was the butternuts which decided Mooweesuk.

Of course no raccoon ever dreams of digging out a nest for himself if he can possibly spare himself

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the labor. But climbing a giant butternut tree which had been hollowed out by a woodpecker first, a gray squirrel after that, and then an owl who had made it still larger, Mooweesuk, after examining it, signaled to the waiting family down below, that he had decided to move into the butternut tree. So, before dawn, they were all asleep in their new home, where they might have been to this day, but for what happened next.

One day, while the raccoon family was fast asleep, old Mooweesuk himself lying out flat upon a limb just outside the hollow nest, he was awakened by a great commotion in the butternut trees. Surely Péboam, god of winter had come, and with his mighty breath he was shaking the forest. Raising his sleepy head from his black paws, he strained his sharp ears, listening with alarm.

“Whack, whack, whack!” Something thumped against the tree, and down fell a shower of brown nuts. Again and again came the blows, and the small raccoons, deep down in the heart of the tree, awoke, whimpering with fear. Finally, Mooweesuk gained courage to peer down over the limb where he clung, just in time to see something big and black, climbing straight up to his nest. Perhaps it was Moween, the black bear.

Now Mooweesuk had much courage when it came to protecting his family from Moween, or any of the

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bear tribe. As he peeked cautiously down he saw something which made him duck his black snout quickly, then, gaining courage, he looked again. It was an Indian boy. Once or twice before the old raccoon had seen a boy, fishing in the swamps, or pulling a canoe across the lake. And, although the boy climbing the tree was after nuts, Moween thought he had come to take away the little raccoons. Then did Mooweesuk summon all his wits to help him.

Watching his chance, he let the boy climb far out upon a long limb; then stealthily he crawled and crept, until he could take up such a position upon the limb as to completely cut off the boy's retreat. To get down from the tree the boy would now have to pass the raccoon. When the boy finally did turn around, there sat a great, angry furry thing facing him; with chattering teeth, and fiery eyes it faced him.

The foolish boy had a coward's heart, and the fierce appearance of the huge raccoon facing him frightened him, so that he shook with fear. In vain the boy tried to frighten away old Mooweesuk. Breaking off boughs from overhead he thrust them into the angry bundle of fur which cut off his retreat, but Mooweesuk only bared his sharp, glittering teeth, uttering low rumbling growls of anger, and making little springs towards the boy.

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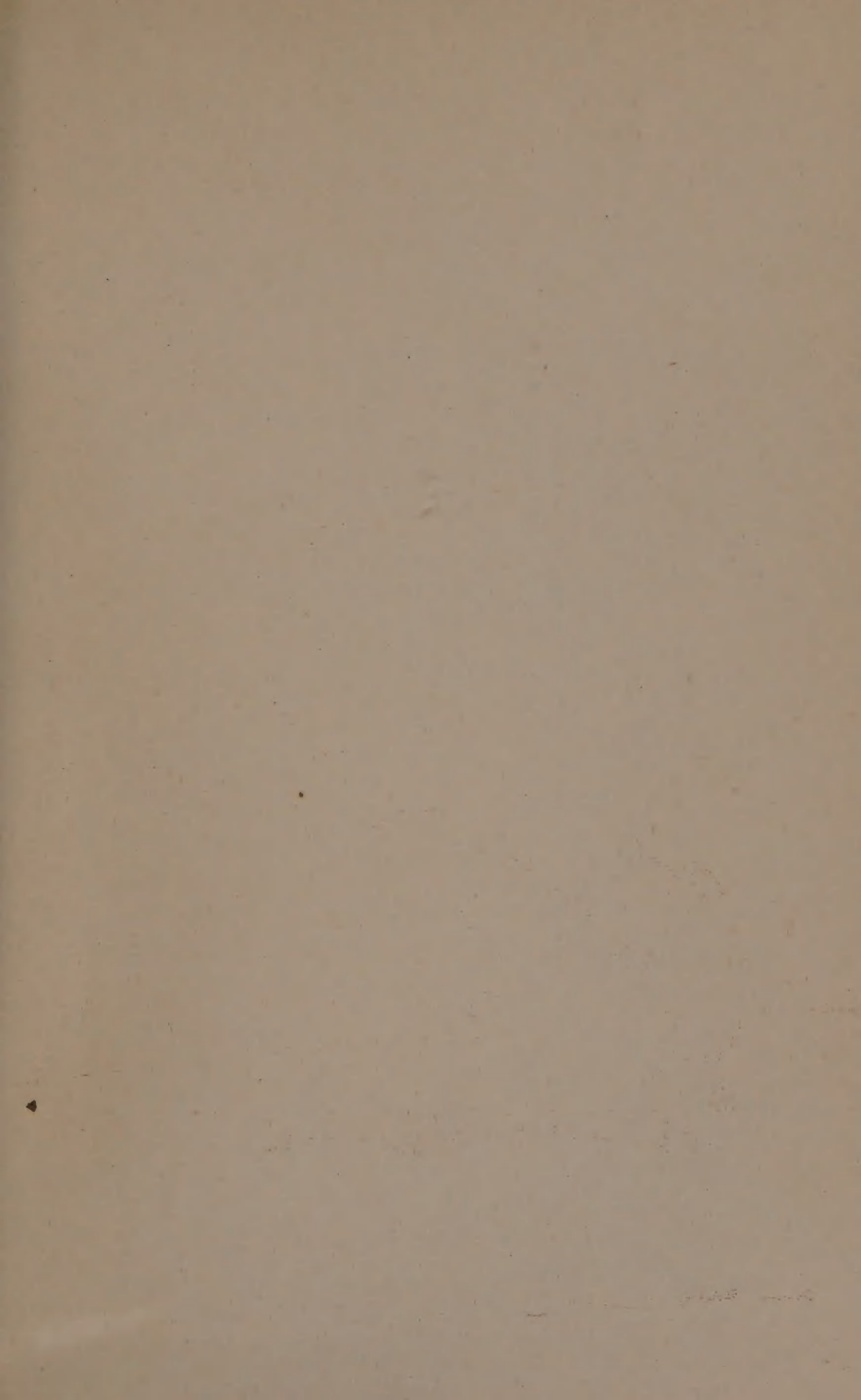
So the boy just sat there waiting to tire him out, thinking he would surely go away. Twilight came stealing over the hills, and the boy was just beginning to think he would have to risk a terrific leap from the high limb to which he clung, or stay there all night, held prisoner by the raccoon, when something happened!

His legs felt numb and cramped. He thought of the pleasant lodge fires of the village, and he longed for them. Cautiously he changed his position, crawling out a little further upon the limb. Suddenly, without warning it cracked and broke; down he fell to the ground with a thud. Fortunately, the limb had not been so high as the cowardly boy had imagined, and so he was only partially stunned. Old Mooweesuk peered down from above and saw the Indian boy go swiftly away and disappear in the forest.

Mooweesuk and his family were upset after their long, anxious vigil. Already did the old raccoon hate the butternut tree. So the very next night Mooweesuk and his family waddled forth again, for they had actually made up their minds to journey back to the nest in the tamarack tree.

By the time the first snowflakes began to sift down through the feathery tamarack grove and across the swamp, they were safe in their old lodge.

"Traho, I have done," finished the old chief.





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